

SERMONS:

TO WHICH IS AFFIXED,

A SHORT DISCOURSE

ON THE

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

BY THE

Rev. Richard Worthington, M. D.

WARRINGTON,

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SERMON

SERMON I.

ROMANS viii. 1.

THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION
TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS,
WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT
AFTER THE SPIRIT.

IN the chapter, immediately preceding these words, so full of comfort to every true disciple of Jesus Christ; the apostle has entered into a critical examination of the nature and condition of man, and the degree of his ability to obey those laws of God, which are by all acknowledged to be holy,

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just

just and good. His reasoning upon the whole of this important subject, demands the serious attention of every thinking person: the more so, because his views and doctrines seem to be, even to *himself*, entirely new, and solely the consequence of his conversion to christianity. "Bred up at "the feet of Gamaliel;" "circum-
"cised the eighth day; an Hebrew of
"the Hebrews; touching the righte-
"ousness, which was in the law,
"blameless;" he, no doubt rested in the sufficiency of these claims, for justification, and, finally, for everlasting salvation. But now, how totally different are his apprehensions of human nature, and of the means employed by God to reconcile the world unto himself! He now perceives, in *that very law*, the great occasion of his *falling*, and becoming obnoxious to the *punishment* annexed to its *transgression*.

Some

Some difficulty seems here to arise from the declaration of the same apostle, wherein he asserts, “ that touching “ the righteousness, which is in the “ law, he is blameless.” To clear up this point, it must be observed, that, by the law, he may in this place mean the *ritual* law of the Jews; which consisted, as is well known, in various ceremonial observances: all very necessary for the purposes on account of which they were instituted; but containing nothing “ which could make the comers thereunto perfect.”

If he meant the great *moral* and *divine* law, he might use the term, *blameless*, in a *general* sense; not in a strict and critical application. Thus (*e. g.*) in the ordinary and regular tenour of his life, and obedience, he might have esteemed himself, upon the whole, blameless. He was so, it may be, in the *common acceptance* of the

phrase: but, that he did not mean to imply *unfinning obedience*, is obvious from the whole of his arguments, and may be easily proved by a recurrence to the chapter followed by the text. In it he reasons thus: “now, “we are delivered from the law, “that being dead wherein we were “held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say “then? is the law, sin? God forbid! “But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For, we “know that the law is spiritual; but “I am carnal, sold under sin. For, “that which I do, I allow not; for “what I *would*, that do I not; but “what I *bate*, that do I. I find “then, a law, that when I would “do good, evil is present with me. “For, I delight in the law of God “after the inner man. But, I see
“another

“ another law in my members, war-
 “ ring against the law of my mind,
 “ and bringing me into captivity to
 “ the law of sin. O, wretched man
 “ that I am! who shall deliver me
 “ from the body of this death? I
 “ thank God through Jesus Christ our
 “ Lord. So then, with the mind I
 “ myself serve the law of God; but,
 “ with the flesh, the law of sin.”

Agreeably to this doctrine, he tells us, in another place, that by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God; “ for, by the law is the knowledge of “ sin.”* This knowledge of sin, this state of lost innocence, can never be done away by a table of perfect laws, committed to imperfect creatures. The transgression of our *first parents*, has tainted and involved the whole human race (from that time born in sin); and

* Rom. iii. 20.

the penal condition annexed to the eating of forbidden fruit, remains in daily execution. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

Had we then been left to labour for justification through the efficacy of those laws, the purity of whose spirit (by few comprehended) was more adapted to condemn than to restore us; wretched indeed would have been the circumstances of fallen man. But, blessed be God, "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," hath appeared: "the day-spring from on high hath visited us;" and we are now assured, *"That there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."*

The first serious question to be asked, then—if the apostle had not before determined it—would be, what is *meant* by being in Christ Jesus? But the
reply

reply is at hand : it is, “ *to live, not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*” It highly concerns us, therefore, to distinguish clearly between these different modes of living ; and, for this reason ; because our future happiness, or misery, is in the event :

To live after the *flesh*, is a comprehensive term of scripture, which may properly be applied to all those, who wander from the rational, the holy, the noble designs, for which they were created : who, to the sad grievance of bringing that natural corruption with them into the world, which they cannot avoid ; make daily additions to it of such *acquired* impurity and guilt, as their reason and consciences are ready to condemn ; and from the acquirement of which, their immortal minds cannot, even here, receive any true pleasure and enjoyment. The ways of such criminal and miserable pursuits,

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are,

are, of course, as various, as the vices and depravities of men. St. Paul has recounted them; in opposition to the graces of a spiritual mind. “ Now
“ the works of the flesh are manifest;
“ which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance,
“ emulations, murders, drunkenness,
“ revellings, and such like.”*

There surely is not one among us, who does not abhor the vices of this hateful catalogue: to whose better feelings they are not wholly repugnant; or who does not see how impossible it is “ that they who do such things, can
“ have any inheritance in the kingdom
“ of God.” But, though these vices are disgusting and odious in contemplation; in the leisure of our retired, thinking moments; though they are condemned by the *law of our minds*; yet, it is to be feared that amidst the temp-

* Gal. v. 19.

tation,

tation, the dissipation, and even the business of the world, many are overtaken by certain of these *glaring* crimes; while few escape innocent from various, *fainter* vices, which, though uncensured by the general voice, or softened to themselves by such ingenious refinements as tend to conceal their natural deformity, are still the offspring of an impure, unregenerate heart; and rank the indulgers of them, with the number of those, among whom, in the eye of truth, “ *the works of the flesh are manifest.*”

It is, perhaps, from the insidious operation of the less notorious vices; such as the world makes light of; that the salvation of men is the more surely undermined. These, by the secrecy of their progress, work their evil courses, almost unperceived and unsuspected; yet, they as effectually withdraw the mind from that state of spiritual

ritual affection; that relish for heavenly conversation; that holiness and purity, “without which no man shall see the Lord,” as do the more daring and active crimes: nay, perhaps more so; for, the commission of high and extravagant wickedness, is, for the most part, quickly followed by the alarms of conscience: remorse seizes the soul: and this, through the goodness of God, leads the sinner to sorrow, and effectual contrition; “to repentance, not to be repented of:” and while, with “a broken and contrite heart,” he perseveres in imploring pardon before the throne of grace; he is gradually led, in the course of penitence and prayer, to a consciousness of those many lesser impurities, attached to human nature, as yet unregenerate; and which, in the sight of God, constitute a state of sin. Together with these he is led to pray for deliverance from his *secret* faults: and while he
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uses all diligence to “go on unto perfection,” he relies, for final success, on the grace and righteousness of God through Jesus Christ.

Whoever studies the gospel, cannot but perceive, that man is in a state of imperfection and sin : that the best of men, if the whole tenor of their lives was to be tried by the perfect standard of the divine law, would have much to regret, and much to fear : that though they may not have been tempted, or may not have consented to enormities of deep complexion ; nay, though their minds have been bent upon holiness and virtue ; upon innocent and laudable pursuits ; yet, that they have by no means “*fulfilled all righteousness,*” and therefore could not stand the scrutiny of that judge, in whose sight, if he was extreme to mark what is done amiss, “should no man *living* be justified.”

This

This being the condition of man upon earth ; it follows, that many shades and imperfections are blended with the virtues of the most correct, the most estimable characters ; and, therefore, that something more than their own merits and perfections, is necessary to salvation.

And here the Creator and Preserver of men, “ who sitteth in the heavens over all from the beginning ; ” the Father of our immortal spirits ; is described, in scripture, as looking down from the throne of his majesty, and wondering that there was no *intercessor*. * “ Therefore *his* arm brought “ salvation unto him, and *his* righteousness, *it* sustained him.” The mystery of redemption, “ which had from “ the beginning been hid in God,” was, in the course of his providence, gradually unfolded ; and, “ in the full-

* Isaiah lix. 16.

ness of time," he sent forth his beloved son to be a propitiation for our sins, and to reconcile the world unto himself. He suffered, and is risen. "There is therefore, *now*, no "condemnation to them which are in "Christ Jesus, who walk not after the "flesh, but after the *spirit*."

To walk after the spirit, is a term of infinite extent and meaning. It seems to involve the very essence of christianity; and to draw the great distinguishing line between a *religious* and *irreligious* character: between the mind, whose desires are holy, chaste, elevated; anxious to be restored to purity and happiness; and that listless, sordid, or, in scripture language, carnal mind, which knows not any thirst for heaven and immortality; which beholds the magnificent works of nature without rising in thought to their great author; and hears of the dispensation of the gospel,

gospel, without curiosity, alarm, or gratitude.

To walk after the spirit, is to feel that we severally belong to that moral and religious œconomy, which includes the whole intellectual system; of which, the supreme Creator and Governor, is God: and, for the salvation of which, the gracious redeemer and mediator, is Jesus Christ: that therefore no man should live unto himself, alone; but unto him who died for us, and rose again; “that like
“as Christ was raised from the dead
“by the glory of the Father, even so
“we also ought to walk in newness of
“life.”

To a religious and spiritualized mind, the objects of high and eager pursuit with the generality of men, appear so frivolous and uninteresting, as hardly to make an impresson. What are
wealth,

wealth, honours, power, dominion ! what are all the perishable acquisitions of the whole world, in comparison with a mind delivered from the bondage and punishment of sin, and reconciled to its Creator by the mediation of his beloved son ! It is this, and this alone, which gives true consequence and comfort to human life, otherwise vain, uneasy, and frequently miserable, even to the most worthy among men.

To walk after the spirit, implies a mind conscious of the deformity of all unrighteousness and sin ; of their entire disagreement with the nature of God ; that they are *hateful* in his sight ; and therefore wholly inconsistent with our present and future good. Yet, more ; it implies a knowledge of our own insufficiencies : of the corruption and degeneracy of human nature : of the deceitfulness of the heart : and of the dangerous

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dangerous

dangerous condition in which we all remain, till the eyes of our understanding are enlightened by the awakening call of the gospel of Christ.

It is *then* we perceive the irregularities and vices into which we have fallen; and the true springs of such disasters. What are these, in the first place, but a wandering, an estrangement, from *God*! a forgetfulness of *him*, “before whom all creatures are naked and manifest!” and of *ourselves* as *his* offspring! of the grand and sacred purposes, for which the Almighty created man in his own image! namely, that he might live to his glory, and pursue his *own* happiness, by a diligent cultivation of “the things that are more excellent;” “by going on from strength to strength;” and, “under a patient continuance in “well doing, by seeking for glory, “and honour, and immortality!”

A farther

A farther very general source of error and misadventure, even among the best inclined to virtue, is a confidence in their own strength; or, rather an ignorance, that, however pure and refined their *minds* may be; however greatly they may “delight in the law of God after the inner man;” there is yet another law, which, in one or other of various ways, is always ready to “war against the law” of their minds, and to bring them “into captivity to the law of sin.”

It is this which opposes and thwarts their pious, best resolutions; which hinders them from doing the things that they would; and seduces to the commission of the things which they hate.

To those, who are sensible that this is the true state and condition of human nature; who feel, lament, and fear its consequences; “whose minds

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are still set upon right ;” to such as these, the gospel brings every encouragement and consolation. It teaches, that notwithstanding our numerous deviations from that perfect rule of life, which we acknowledge and adore ; yet our delight in what is pure and holy, if we *continue* to love it, and, as far as we are able, to *pursue* it, shall, in the end, bring us to the everlasting enjoyment of it. To live an *immaculate* life, is more than the frailties of nature will admit. But, it behoves every christian to be aware of, and to flee from the repetition of all past iniquity ; and to redeem the remainder of his time, by doing, what *all* men have in their own power ; *by living as well as he can*. Whoever does this, with remembrance of God, will be received by him through Jesus Christ, and blessed in his salvation.

Once more : *To walk after the spirit*, implies an elevation, a liberality, a certain

tain dignity of soul and character, which can rise, and be supported, only from an *heavenly* source. It is something more than an imperfect obedience to the letter of the law. It includes a more divine principle of thought and action. It is to feel a deliverance from the servitude and burden of sin : from the rigour and inflictions of *severe justice* ; and “ to stand fast in that liberty, where-
“ with Christ has made us free.” It is something more than merely “ putting away the *filth of the flesh*.” It is the answer to God of a “ *good conscience through Jesus Christ*.” This it is, to walk, as the apostle expresses it, “ not after the *flesh*, but after the *spirit*.” The importance of this is obvious to every man : because, to them, who are thus influenced, “ *there is no condemnation*.” That law of ordinances, which, though necessary for the introduction of the gospel,

“ was yet against us, and contrary to us,” our Saviour hath removed, and opened a more perfect way to heaven and immortality, by his meritorious cross and passion. Whoever seeks an inheritance in this great salvation; whoever looks for the appearance of his Saviour once more in peace; must *now* shake off every base and vicious disposition; every unrighteous thought and deed; and, having the hope of a christian, must study “ to live worthy “ of the vocation wherewith he is “ called.” It should be his regular practice, as it would soon become the enjoyment of his life, to purify himself as his Saviour is pure: to repent him truly of his former sins: to make daily advances in holiness and virtue: to have his conversation in heaven. He will labour to abound more and more in those excellent qualifications, which the apostle emphatically terms, “ gifts of the spirit.” These are,
“ love,

“ love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against *such* there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.”

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SERMON II.

MATTHEW v. 16.

LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT
THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND
GLORIFY YOUR FATHER, WHICH IS IN
HEAVEN.

THE connection of moral and religious excellence, without which, either would be imperfect, and, possibly, vain, is so strongly marked and enforced in the sermon of *Christ upon the mount*, from whence the text is taken, as to be obvious to every common reader, no less than to the cautious and learned inquirer.

It was the character of him, who brought the glad tidings of salvation, to exhort and teach in words so simple, but so majestic; so perspicuous and powerful; as at once force themselves upon the understanding; and produce a ready assent to the testimony borne him, while he was yet upon earth, “that he spake, as never man spake.”

What St. Matthew observes, after the conclusion of this divine sermon, we can easily conceive; “And it came
“to pass, when Jesus had finished these
“sayings, the people were astonished
“at his doctrine; for *he* taught them
“as one having authority; and not as
“the scribes.”

Whoever reads this sublime discourse with the smallest attention, cannot but be sensible of this authority upon his mind; and will surely allow, that it bears such evidence of divine original,

as

as cannot be resisted, without the greatest violence at once to the feelings and the judgment.

The words of the text are now to be considered. And, first, we are directed, to “let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works.”

The human heart, in its state of highest culture, is not impregnable to temptation, and the pernicious assault of wicked precedent. “Evil communications may corrupt the best manners,” and allure the most virtuous disposition into criminal compliances; may at length beguile us, by habitual solicitations, into the most audacious wickedness. To instance examples in proof of this, either from the book of scripture, or the book of nature, cannot be necessary: it is allowed, that men are prone to imitation; that vice
is

is contagious ; and that the destructive consequences of bad example, both to private families, and public societies, are notorious. But this is not all. There exists in the human heart, while unchastened by self-discipline, while unreclaimed by the doctrines and graces of the gospel, a propensity to dwell upon and to expose the *imperfections* of a character : to allow its shades, not only to obscure, but entirely to conceal its brighter qualities : to magnify faults into vices : and, where a reputation admits of suspicion, to lessen the value of good actions, by ascribing them to selfish and ignoble motives.

There exists also very visibly in the world—from what source derived I do not inquire—a certain unaptness to esteem the generality of that order, whose appointed office it is to do all the good in their power to the souls and bodies of men ; to mourn with them
that

that mourn ; to go unto the prisoner ; to visit the sick, the disconsolate, the dying ; to preach the gospel to the poor ; and to bring all men to the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. It becomes then very eminently the duty of *these*, but it is highly incumbent upon *all*, who would merit the appellation of *christians*, “ to let “ their light so shine before men, that “ they may see their good works :” that is, may be thoroughly convinced from an intimate knowledge of their characters, that the works are the true offspring of a moral and religious mind : that they are the genuine fruits of righteousness ; springing from the love of goodness, and a reverence for God.

Now, there seems to be only one method, by which men can perform this excellent work ; that is, *by living a life of regular, consistent piety*. It is not enough that they fulfil certain duties ;

ties; such perhaps as inclination may lead to; or that they abstain from those peculiar vices, in which, it may be, they cannot indulge, without inconvenience to their health or circumstances. Whoever would set forth an example worthy the imitation of christians, must not hope to do it by partial observances, but by a conduct *uniformly* good. He must “give no *improper* offence in any thing; but in all things approve himself. He must abstain (not only from the commission, but) from all appearance of evil; he must labour to become perfect, as his Father which is in heaven is perfect.” When he has accomplished these things; when he has raised within him this goodly fabric of religion and morals; he will then be able to execute the injunction of his Lord; “his light will shine before men, and they will see his good works.”

However

However great may be the depravity of the world ; how distant soever may be the wanderings of men from the uprightness and innocence in which they were created ; there yet exist in the human soul such consciousness of right, such admiration of true excellence, as command an approbation of piety and virtue, and render irreligious and vicious acts, detestable. Though men may practise ill, few are so abandoned to all good, as to have become wicked upon *principle*. The reasonable mind will always acknowledge the unfitness of wrong and robbery ; the criminality of profaneness ; the rectitude of honesty and justice ; and the dignity of true religion and virtue. Though, in the phrase of Solomon, " God hath made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions," there still lives within the soul of man, that impression of the divine nature, which revolts at the very recital of base
and

and infamous deeds, and rises into pious fervour in the contemplation of generosity and true worth. Though long the unhappy prey of vain imaginations, criminal pursuits, and painful consequences ; the steady light of good example may still attract the wandering mind : may at first excite curiosity, or delight the fancy ; till, finally, it enlightens the understanding, and, through the GRACE OF GOD, regenerates the heart. The reformed penitent, looking back on the days which he had wasted in riotous living ; which he had given up to uncleanness and iniquity ; reasons with himself, “ what fruit had I then, in those “ things, whereof I am now ashamed ! “ for the end of those things is death : “ but now, being made free from sin, “ and become the servant of God, the “ fruit is holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Therefore, for the sake of christian charity ; for the worthy

thy purpose of rescuing a brother from vice and misery (if there be even a *chance* of doing this) “let your light “so shine before men, that they may “see your good works.”

Through a want of due attention to this divine command, have arisen many irregularities and evils in the christian world. That the most zealous minds are liable to pernicious errors in the concerns of religion, the experience of successive ages is ready to testify. Whence but from a gross misconception of the spirit of the gospel, heightened in many instances by political views, has sprung all that violence of contending parties, which has involved millions of the human race in misery and blood? Combating with antichristian rage, one for Paul, another for Apollos, each heated sectary has, in its turn, failed to recollect, that *all* of them, by reason of these very animosities,

fities, proved themselves “*carnal*, and were become judges of evil thoughts:” that while they were thus exposed to the contempt or censure of *the peace-makers*, the true children of God, they had themselves unhappily forgotten, “that they had *one Master* in heaven, “even Christ, and that all they were “brethren.”

But as under certain circumstances of active life, urged on by ambition, and aided by power, religion has become vehement, oppressive and sanguinary; so, among pious and gentle spirits, whose lot has fallen in the quiet paths of life, it is wont to retire from the sight of men, and to lose of its usefulness by narrowing its circle. A respectful attention to the words of the text would correct this error; so injurious to the honour of religion, and to the benefit of our brethren. It is the duty of christians to be, more than all

all men, conspicuous in their lives ; open and manifest in the whole of their conversation : “ that, if there be any
“ who speak against them as evil doers ;
“ they may by their good works which
“ they shall behold, glorify God in the
“ day of visitation.” Our Saviour prayed, “ not for his disciples to be
“ taken out of the world, but that
“ they should be kept from the evil.” To live in the world in this divine sense ; that is, to give their fellow men a full opportunity of seeing their works and examining their characters ; is the duty of all, whose example may tend to the furtherance of religion and good morals. If they are really earnest in the cause of the gospel, they will apply themselves to spread it in the world : and, that they may not vainly toil in a field where the harvest indeed is great ; they will study to recommend themselves, by adapting their manners to men as they have need ; so long as they

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can do it, without departing from character; and are conscious, that, if as occasion offers, "they become all things to all men," it is truly with a view to their edification: that so, "by any means they may save some."

It may here be remarked, that there exists a description of men; by no means few in number; who, though highly sensible to the feelings, and to the seriousness of religion; are so irresolute; so insufficient; so wanting to themselves; as to swerve from the most important cause in the world, through the base fear of being accounted *singular*. Do men desert any present interest, or even any fugitive pleasure on this account? What are these compared with the alternative of endless shame and misery; or the glorious privilege of everlasting felicity! That these are at stake, our Saviour hath very awfully admonished us: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of
" me,

“ me, and of my words ; of him will
 “ the son of man be ashamed, when he
 “ shall come in his own glory, and in
 “ his Father’s, and of the holy angels.”*

Again, there are others, of timid minds, who are withheld from the due manifestation of their light before men, by an apprehension, that their good works, if exposed without any covering to the public eye, may be ascribed to the unworthy motives of vanity and ostentation. But, where the character is really good ; where, upon the whole, a regard to piety and virtue is conspicuous ; such fear is vain. It is the disadvantage of *irregular* characters to dread, with reason, the construction of mankind. Pure and undefiled religion, if not always imitated, is certainly revered, even by the multitude ; and where it really exists, is assuredly known, “ even as a tree by its fruits.”

* Luke ix. 26.

But, were this possible to be otherwise; still there would remain abundance of satisfaction to every good man, in the performance of his duty; while, conscious of integrity, he keeps in view the true *end* of exhibiting his light before men; (namely) “that while they see his good works, they may glorify his Father which is in heaven.”

To attempt the separation of morality from religion, is an enterprise so daring, so absurd, and so unnatural, as to have been ventured upon, by *few*. With the general sentiment of men entirely hostile to their pretensions; betrayed by a philosophy which *must* be false, because, if urged to its final consequences, it would undermine the foundation of all security and order; the authors of irreligious systems, have either felt the mortification of a total neglect, or seen their principles refuted and disgraced, by men of better minds
and

and sounder knowledge than themselves.

The *religious* sentiment, is, in higher or inferior degree, engraven on the hearts of all mankind. Where the knowledge of the eternal *godhead*, and all honourable notions of his perfect nature have been lost; the acknowledgment of superintending, invifible powers is yet clearly to be traced. Is not this instanced by the extravagant rites; the vain superstitions; and the idolatry of barbarous nations! Nations, among whom the first and true religion has long been forgotten; where the advantages of learning have never been enjoyed; and upon whom the day-spring, revelation from on high, has not, even yet, descended.

Thus the religious principle, rising into worship, more or less pure, appears to be natural to the mind of man, however rude and unimproved his state.

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But it is the peculiar privilege of those, on whom the light of the gospel has shone, to have that great Being, "whom others ignorantly worship, declared unto them." To them, he is no longer "the unknown God," "nor is he far from every one of them." Though the beautiful and magnificent works of nature; though "the rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness," might have left those without excuse, who paid not due reverence to an Almighty Author; yet, to these glorious operations, God hath superadded the further witness of himself by a regular series of successive revelations; and closed the vast design by the mission of his beloved Son.

It remains, then, for all, who call themselves christians, to reflect, seriously, on the extent of that obligation, due for the abundant mercy shed upon them

them through Jesus Christ; who left the bosom of his Father, to rescue a degenerate world from sin and misery: who, when he had enlightened the eyes of our understanding, and enriched us with the knowledge of God; had instructed us in the fulness of all moral and religious duty; had taught the way of God in truth; finished the great and infinite dispensation, “by bearing
“our sins in his own body on the
“tree; that we being dead to sin
“should live unto righteousness;” *
When, with the eye of steady faith, we look back on all these things; how reasonable seems the apostle’s exhortation!—“whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Is it not from his immediate hand that we have derived our very existence, with every supply that preserves

* 1 Pet. ii. 24.

and renders it comfortable ! From him, do we not receive all the powers of our bodies, and the glorious faculties of our immortal souls ! “ In him “ we actually live and move and have “ our being.” Unto him are not all thanks and praises due, for that boundless variety of convenience and enjoyment, with which this habitable earth is so bountifully stored ! In him, whatever is agreeable in life ; whatever is delightful in the time of health and spirits ; whatever is soothing in the day of infirmity or disquietude ; whatever is endearing in the intercourse of our beloved friends and tenderest connections ; in *him*, all these blessings have their spring and centre. From him we derive our capacities of enjoying them. They are the gift of God. But, if with the numberless enjoyments of human life, the ALMIGHTY has mingled pain and travail, and sorrow ; he has not ordained these, to grieve
and

and to afflict the children of men. *He* must be very deficient in piety and wisdom, who, in the present condition of human nature, cannot discern the goodness of God, as well in his visitations, as in his more obvious mercies.

In the various misfortunes of his life; though the sorrows of his heart are enlarged; amidst the extremest sufferings of nature; nay, though he is yet to pass “through the valley of the shadow of death,” the *christian* rejoiceth in *hope*; and, in reliance on the protection of Almighty power, exclaims, “yet I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” To the *godly*, there riseth up light in the darkness. They look forward, through the gloomy region of the grave, to a joyful resurrection. It is this hope, and faith, which constitute the very essence of christianity. It is a hope, which appertaineth to all true disciples of their Lord, as an anchor

anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast. It is the very joy of their hearts : the encouragement of virtue : the consolation of oppressed worth : the support of a *dejected mind* : and the perfection of all comfort and satisfaction here below.

And, as it well becomes the just to be thankful ; so they, who, through the goodness of God, have a lively feeling of his mercy and salvation in Jesus Christ ; are, above *all* men, called upon to every pious and grateful acknowledgment : to an active exertion for the welfare of their brethren ; at once in this world, and in that which is approaching : to live to the glory of God.

In the words of the text ; “ To
“ let their light so shine before men,
“ that they may see their good works,
“ and glorify their Father which is
“ in heaven.

SERMON

S E R M O N I I I .

ISAIAH xl. 3.

PREPARE YE THE WAY OF THE LORD.

WHEN we attend to the operations of the Creator, as they appear either in the inanimate works of nature, or in the living creatures which move upon the earth ; we observe that both are conducted to the perfection they attain, by gradual and regular advances.

It is by the operation of some continued and secret process, that, from the bare grain committed to the ground,
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the verdant plant is produced, which gradually unfolds its stores; till, ripened by the influence of successive seasons, the year is crowned with the expected harvest.

By this unsearchable and active principle, varying according to the exigency of each particular subject, the whole face of nature is clothed with usefulness and beauty. The common, but needful grass; the herb; the tree, yielding seed after its kind; arrive at maturity through progressive movements. In some, the advance to full formation is indeed rapid and astonishing: still it is progressive. In others, it is so slow, as to work almost unobserved by man; requiring, for its completion, a tedious revolution of time.

This same established law, by which the *vegetable* kingdom is governed and directed,

directed, applies, I have observed, to the nature and œconomy of the *animal* creation.

From beginnings, small, and tender, and impotent, we see *them* arrive, by successive improvement, to the admirable properties of strength, beauty, docility and use, which they severally display.

However lightly such an œconomy as this may be regarded in the inferior subjects of this great creation; it is fitted to impress an observant and a pious mind with reverence and delight. Amidst the lowest of the works of God, a religious and wise man will easily find occasions of wonder and of praise. He will be for ever uniting his voice with the Psalmist: "O Lord, "how wonderful are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all."

If

If we now extend our views to the more sublime subject and study of mankind ; we perceive, that in conformity to the general plan, *they* likewise are placed in a progressive situation. This equally applies to their *natural*, their *social*, and their *intellectual* character.

Born in a condition more helpless, perhaps, than most of the animals beneath us ; our very existence depends upon the bounty and the care of others. The degrees by which we proceed from this state of weakness, to that wherein we are able to nourish and to protect ourselves, are not only gradual ; the result of time and continuance ; but of so tedious acquisition, as nearly to escape remark.

Notwithstanding this, the season of youth and gaiety ; the hours undisturbed by care ; the mind untouched by the recollection of any past occasions
for

for regret; by any prospect of disquietude to come; the frame of body exempt from present infirmity; the spirit, replete with innocence, and liberty and joy——All these, alas! too soon escape us, in defiance of that tediousness of life, so affectedly complained of by those, who add heaviness to hours, through the vacancy of their minds, and the uselessness of their lives.

The pleasurable season of youth being passed, a more steady and important period of human life succeeds, and composes every man of thought and propriety, into a ready compliance with the equitable demands of *social order*.

That CIVIL COMMUNITY is conducted very slowly towards its most perfect attainments, the history of man in all ages and nations will certainly evince. It is by the tedious lesson of experience; by the collected acquisition
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of ages; that wise and preserving laws are discerned, introduced and established; that the art has been taught of rendering government truly beneficial to the interests of the people; not gratifying alone to the personal views of those unrighteous governors, who seem to consider the great body of mankind, as no more than instruments of their pleasure, or objects of their tyranny.

It is from the hoards and treasures of time, under the benignity of a gracious Providence, that the comforts and conveniencies, the useful arts and infinite accommodations of civilized life, are gradually deduced and perfected.

To pursue this subject is unnecessary. It is easily seen, that the advantages derivable to man from *social union*; no less than the endowments of his *animal nature*; are the result of time and progress.

If

If we now attend to the *intellectual* character of man, we quickly perceive, that his faculties are expanded, and his knowledge attained by regular and assiduous labour : that, to succeed in acquiring it, he is compelled to trace it from beginnings almost imperceptible. It is by reason of use, as St. Paul observes, that “the senses are exercised even to discern good and evil.” The intellectual principle of the human mind, if not buried in the rubbish of sensual matter, is for ever advancing, by fresh acquisitions of excellence, towards the great source from whence its spiritual affections have originally flowed. It is for ever pressing toward its mark ; “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Yet it is by gradual habits of improvement in piety and christian virtues ; by a diligent cultivation of “the things that are more excellent ;” that we must, under the grace of God, “attain to the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

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From this short view of the *natural* and the *moral* state of things, it appears that maturity and perfection are attained by slow and gradual operation.

Such being the truth ; it becomes reasonable to expect, that whatever lays claim to an heavenly origin ; whatever has in reality proceeded from the same source of infinite wisdom and design, should in consequence be impressed, throughout its *general* character, with a resemblance to that visible œconomy which we discover in the course and constitution of nature.

That the *scriptures* bear this peculiar testimony, must be obvious to every common reader, who has made them the object of his deliberate study.

He will perceive, that from the *fall* to the *redemption* of man, by Jesus Christ, there is one continued chain of *prophecy*, advancing in perspicuity ; and
of

of *events*, rising in importance. He will further see, that the whole is adapted by the increasing purity of its doctrines, as men were able to bear it, to conduct them through the ceremonious observances of the *law*, to the liberty of the *gospel*; from the circumcision of the *letter*, “to that of the heart, in the spirit.”

When we continue these observations, more especially, to the character and coming of our Lord; we find them very conspicuously applicable.

The first prophecy which the scriptures present us with; and which can find its full completion only in the office of Christ; was made to Adam; when he was assured, that *his seed should bruise the serpent's head*.* The next; of grand and infinite concern; still pointing to the coming of Christ; was delivered to Abraham; who, for

* Genesis iii. 15.

faith and obedience, was favoured with the unlimited promise, that, *in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.**

From the period of this grand and momentous promise, we find throughout the inspired writings, the person and office of Christ progressively opening to our views and understandings; till, with the course of prophecy, verified by the events of history, we are finally conducted to the messenger who was immediately sent before the face of the Saviour; and whose dignity and office is foretold by Isaiah, in language of exhortation and grandeur. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a high way for our God.”

It is the *exhortation* which especially appertaineth to us; and which, at *this*

* Genesis xxii. 18.

season more immediately, recommends itself to our regards. To acquiesce in this requisition, must surely appear reasonable to every man who feels the dignity of the christian name, and the necessity of christian conduct. He who is fully satisfied that God hath sent forth his Son ; that, for a purpose of no less importance than the salvation of all those, who, with hearty repentance and true faith, turn to *him*, this divine person fulfilled a ministry upon earth ; that he dwelt among us “ to teach the way of God in truth ; ” above all, that he actually died for our sins, and rose again for our justification ! Whoever is persuaded of these truths, will be forward to testify his reverence of a character, whose condescension and whose dignity so far exceed his powers of comprehension. To all who have detected the corruption of their own nature ; its tendency to swerve, either in thought, word, or

deed, from the perfect rule of life, enjoined by the gospel: to all, who perceive that they are sinners; it must prove a declaration as full of comfort as of grace, that Christ “came not
“into the world to condemn the world,
“but that the world through him
“might be saved.”*

With a view to impress upon our minds, a sentiment worthy of this great event, our church has distinguished the present season by the title of Advent: thereby intending to cherish in the serious, and recommend unto the gay, a remembrance of the first coming of Jesus Christ. In doing this, she may be supposed to repeat the exhortation of the Baptist: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

Among the primitive christians, the season of Advent was observed with great solemnity and devotion. To

* John iii. 17.

point out the method by which so pious an example may be followed, and so good an end obtained, is less needful, than to remind you of their great propriety. Few of us are so deficient in the knowledge, as in the practice of our duty. The former is inculcated in a manner too obvious and decisive to admit of any error. It has pleased God to convey this necessary instruction to us in a threefold manner: by the dictates of *reason*; by the voice of *conscience*; and, finally, by the word of *scripture*; closed with the mission and testimony of his beloved Son.

For all of these, we are highly indebted to his bounty and all-wise provision: but, for the *last*, viewed in all its circumstances and relations, our debt of gratitude is wholly inconceivable.

The object to which it is applied—the visitation of Christ to the human

race—involves a concern of an *eternal* moment. Our gratitude should therefore be boundless, as the subject which incites it. The only method by which it can be expressed, is in a diligent compliance with the known will of him, to whom it is so greatly due.

This, to be effectual, should, doubtless, be formed into a settled habit of mind; operating continually, without distinction of times and seasons. Nevertheless, a regard to these, while it remains unconnected with any thing that may lead to false notions of worship, cannot, by any thinking man, be adjudged inexpedient, in the present condition of society. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, does indeed reprove *them* for scrupulous observances: “Ye observe days, and months, “and times, and years. I am afraid “of you, lest I have bestowed upon “you labour in vain.”* This may, for

* Chap. iv. v. 10, 11.

a moment

a moment, seem repugnant to the regulation of the church in her whole appointment of fasts and festivals. A little examination will remove the apparent difficulty.

When we read this celebrated Epistle, which may not be improperly termed an abridgment of christianity; it appears that the apostle is labouring to explain the design and operation of the law committed unto Moses; and promulgated by him to the Israelites; after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

He distinguishes, with great precision, between the nature of that law, and the effectual, saving power of a well-founded faith in Christ. He proves to them, that the design and tendency of the law, was to prepare mankind for the reception of that *liberty* and *grace*, announced in the gospel.

“ The

“ The law was added because of
“ transgressions ; till the seed should
“ come to whom the *promise* was made.”
By this, he means the covenant, which
God made with Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the promulgation of the law ; when he was assured, that “ in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.” This gracious promise was fulfilled by the mission and office of Christ, who came “ to redeem them that were under the law,” and to perfect the covenant of faith, and grace, and love, and righteousness, between men and their Creator.

In the first chapter of St. John's gospel, we find the same distinction strongly marked : “ For the law was
“ given by Moses ; but grace and truth
“ came by Jesus Christ.”

But, here, be it well remembered,
that the observance and practice of
those

those *divine and moral precepts*, which are *essential* in the law ; is ratified and preached by the gospel ; therefore, the obligation to reverence and obey them, is, if possible, increased. The blessings annexed to obedience under the first covenant, cannot be more forcibly declared than in the book of Leviticus, chap. xviii. “ Ye shall do my judgments and keep mine ordinances to walk therein : I am the Lord your God, ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments ; which, if a man do, he shall *live* in them : I am the Lord.” It may not be improper to unite with this, the authority of the gospel ; in the words of Christ himself : “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

“ With the Father of lights is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

“ing.”* The divine and moral precept of that law which he at first decreed, and appointed to be kept, must have possessed the principle of *eternal rectitude*; and therefore, as far as *conduct* is implied, must contain a sure and unalterable rule. Thence it is, “that one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”†

Fully to answer this infinite demand, was possible for him, only, who, at the close of his ministry, could lift up his eyes to heaven, and say, with truth; “Father, I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” But, it is required of every christian to perfect the moral and religious character to the utmost of his power; because, while Christ, in infinite mercy, suffered for us, he hath, as St. Peter reminds

* James i. 17.

† Matt. v. 18.

“us,

us, “left us an example, that ye should follow his steps :” * further, yet ; because we are fully assured, that God “hath appointed a day in which he “will judge the world in righteousness ;” † and that, “he will render “unto every man according to his “deeds.” ‡

From this examination of the subject, it must be very obvious, that when St. Paul is distinguishing to the Galatians the superior efficacy of the gospel covenant, to that of the law, delivered by Moses ; he by no means intends to take a jot from those weightier matters of it, *judgment, mercy,* and *faith* ; obligations, which are eternally binding upon all who lay any claim to the benefits of the christian dispensation. For this, we might refer to his own forcible expression, in the third chapter of his epistle to the Romans : “Do we then make void the

* 1 Pet. ii. 21. † Acts xvii. 31. ‡ Rom. ii. 6.

“law

“law through faith? God forbid: “yea, we establish the law.” Neither when he disapproves their observance of *days*, and *months*, does he at all mean to prohibit the due commemoration of whatever may lead the soul to pious meditations, and impress it with the signal testimonies of divine benevolence: such, for example, as the mission of our Lord and Saviour.

But, he might with very great propriety argue with his new converts, over-zealous for the law; more especially, if for the law of *ordinances*; that it was no more than the shadow of those good things, which were now come, and which were fully manifested by the gospel covenant.

The subordination of the works of the law to the saving efficacy of Christ, he labours to make clear to them. To this purpose the following is employed
among

among various decisive arguments. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." If your observance of that law were sufficient to justification and perfection; if that spirituality of mind and affections, that perfect purity of heart and of desire, wherein true holiness consists, were derivable from the law; if there was not in the nature of man something which interfered with, and opposed the perfect operation of the divine commands upon his mind, whence was the occasion for the *new* covenant! The faith it preaches! the grace it offers! and the remission of sins which it effects, by the offering of Christ once for all! "If righteousness, *ultimate*, "*perfect* righteousness, come by the law; then Christ is dead in vain."

I was led to this digression by having casually remarked that St. Paul had reproved his new converts, the
Galatians,

Galatians, for their zealous observance of *unimportant ceremonies*. I have endeavoured to explain the reason of this reproof; and to shew that it does not in any measure apply to the observance of a season, the commemoration of which is qualified to cherish and increase the principle of true religion in the heart; that the apostle's rebuke was directed to those, who were departing from the purity and spirit of the gospel, to the letter of the law; and were, perhaps, becoming attached to the vain customs and appointments of such Jewish teachers, "as had made the commandments of God of none effect by their traditions."

There is no possibility of error in commemorating the advent of Christ. His coming in the flesh is one of those important events, fitted to seize upon the mind, and fill it with astonishment. It calls for our most affectionate remembrance;

membrance; and will warrant every pious observance, by which, they, who are devout among us, may be zealous to distinguish so gracious a season.

They who understand the greatness of its consequence, will be forward, by discourse and by example, to invite the less informed and the thoughtless, to make a pause in their career of folly, and reflect upon the vastness of that design, which required, for its completion, the *revolution of ages*: and which was not perfected, until, that, “in the “*fulness of time*, God sent forth his “Son.” The appearance and office of Christ upon earth, was the great event which the ordinances of the law had shadowed, and prophecy had foretold. “To him gave *all* the prophets witness.”*

“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”†

* Acts x. 43.

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Is not the coming of this divine person to be honoured and revered? May it not be annually commemorated without any danger of falling into superstitious vanities?

But, how inadequate to the occasion is our reverence, or gratitude, or praise! Yet, they will be accepted, as the only offerings, with which, for his inestimable benefits, we can possibly appear before God.

If we are sincere in bringing these gifts to the altar; the fruits of such affections will be manifest in the tenour of our lives. A heart, honestly devoted to God, and in love with his perfections, will abound in those excellent properties, which harmonize and complete the character. If we really employ a suitable portion of the present season in contemplating the nativity of Christ, we shall, in consequence,

quence, be led to review the eventful history of his life ; to study his precepts ; to set before us his great example.

Of this, in a *moral* acceptation, the conspicuous feature, is, “ he went about doing good : ” not in a limited and imperfect measure : his goodness comprehended a perfect work : it applied to the *bodies* and to the *souls* of men. “ He came to seek and to save “ that which was lost : to publish the “ good tidings of great joy, which “ should be to all people.”

If therefore we would prepare to celebrate his coming, in a way acceptable to him ; we must, in the first place, labour to imitate his character : *we* must go about doing good.

Opportunities of this, in greater or less degree, are afforded to most men.

Where they are denied, a willing mind cannot be concealed ; and will not pass unrewarded. The season of the year calls loudly for the exercise of benevolence and charity. Many there be, even among the industrious and well-disposed, who are frequently thrown into circumstances of embarrassment and want.

It is an ill-conditioned mind which is forward in connecting poverty with idleness ; and distress with infamy. This proneness to close with a ready excuse for withholding our compassion, betrays a disposition not *inclined* to relieve. It suggests that there is a morbid coldness of heart, which would hardly warm into pity on *any* occasion. It manifests a tendency to “ turn away the face,” and desert the cause of the poor.

If we err ; let us do it on the safer side. It is better to be imposed upon
in

in *many* instances, than to draw back from a *single* one, where our humanity is justly solicited. Rather than this ; “ let us cast our bread upon the surface of the waters.”

Be not afraid ! A small degree of prudence may regulate a very large one of benevolence. Humanity and charity, *should* they have committed some few excesses, will not appear in evidence against any man. He will not reproach himself upon his death-bed, for having done too much.

Together with an active attention to the *temporal* wants of his brethren, the christian will add a still more important one ; a concern for their *eternal* interests. He will, by remonstrance, advice, and exhortation, persuade men, as far as he is able, to flee from sin and all iniquity. He will remind the irreligious, the immoral, the wicked

man, that he is at enmity with God ; and that his course of life, if persisted in, must terminate in misery. He will take all seasonable opportunity of commending the precepts of the gospel to the consciences of men. He will illustrate the superior advantages of a holy and good life, even in this world. He will point to its immortal glory and peace in that which is to come. He will take every occasion of comforting the weak hearted ; of inspiring them with hope ; and of encouraging to a perseverance in good works.

For himself, he will labour to “ acquaint himself with God, and be at peace.”

It is by such a life as this, that God is to be honoured ; our fellow men benefited ; and ourselves made happy : and it is thus, that every true christian will “ prepare the way of the Lord.”

SERMON

SERMON IV.

LUKE xviii. 28, 29, 30.

THEN PETER SAID, LO, WE HAVE LEFT ALL AND FOLLOWED THEE. AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THERE IS NO MAN WHO HATH LEFT HOUSE, OR PARENTS, OR BRETHREN, OR WIFE, OR CHILDREN, FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD'S SAKE, WHO SHALL NOT RECEIVE MANIFOLD MORE IN THIS PRESENT TIME, AND IN THE WORLD TO COME LIFE EVERLASTING.

TO secure happiness is the ultimate design of human action. For this, in whatever objects we suppose it to be centered, our various enterprizes are

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undertaken

undertaken with readiness, and pursued through difficulties, and frequently amidst dangers, with spirit and resolution. But the opinion, prevalent with men, on the important question, “what is really good for them in this life,” is, if we are to judge by the general conduct, not altogether conformable to the doctrine in my text. This intimates, that the perfection of human happiness, consists in a sincere endeavour to promote, participate, and extend to the uttermost, the glory, honour and blessings of the kingdom of God. Whoever applies himself to this sublime purpose, has assurance of the greatest possible advantages, at once in this life, and in that which is to come; “he shall receive manifold more in the present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”

This excellent promise, coming with the authority of the Son of God; while it refutes the notions of those who
mistake

mistake moroseness and gloom for holiness and religion; teaches us, that our preparation for eternal happiness, secures, not diminishes our *temporal* interests.

In illustration of this, let us (*first*) inquire—with fairness and temper—whether good sense and reason do not recommend a serious attention to the words of the text, by certifying us of the vanity of all pursuits, in which *a happy futurity is not the ultimate object, and the divine comforts of religion our present sanctuary.*

We shall (*secondly*) endeavour to point out, by what means the truly religious man, does, positively, “receive manifold more in this present time.”

First; Good sense and reason at once discover the emptiness of this world's acquisitions; strictly so called; by reminding

minding us, that all of them, in their most flourishing condition, are exposed to a multitude of fatal chances: and should they, by fortunate coincidence, escape for a few years wholly unimpaired; that a few more will inevitably reduce them to that common level of destruction, towards which, all things, finite, are, every year, day and hour, making rapid and irresistible progress. In this world, uncertainty and changeableness await our dearest, our most laudable pursuits: nor, amidst such a scene of universal fluctuation, has the human mind, in any possible circumstances of period or character, arrived at that security and rest, to which it so anxiously aspires; and for the enjoyment of which, its immortal faculties are so admirably fitted.

Real happiness cannot exist without an assurance of its continuance. Hence, the man who attaches himself solely to a world,

world, where precariousness for ever attends on possession; where the blessings of domestic, nay, even of religious life, are liable to various interruptions from the evil passions of the impious and the violent; where time is gradually withdrawing his dearest connections from him, or him from them; where death is the natural consequence of life; the man, who, "compassed with such a cloud of witnesses," to the vanity of present objects, can yet neglect to cultivate a desire beyond time and mortality, has either degraded his nature by restraining its taste for spiritual enjoyment; or reflects not on the imperfection of that which is his portion at present.

To this source, a want of reflection, may be traced most of the follies and vices, into which the various descriptions among men are prone to be hurried.

Did

Did the *man, ambitious of power and pre-eminence*, reflect seriously, that these, when obtained on the most virtuous conditions, are inseparable from constant anxiety and mean condescension; and, when arrived at by the ways of unrighteousness, are naturally followed by remorse and horror; how quickly would he withdraw from his destructive course, and learn to disappoint his infamous propensities!

Did the *man, intent on no other pursuit than the gain of laborious traffic*, consider well the perishable nature of human merchandize; he might grow wise enough to perceive, "it is but
"lost labour that he hastes to rise up
"early, and so late takes rest, and eats
"the bread of carefulness." He might learn to draw a sensible comparison between things which endure but for a moment, and those which will succeed, when the gain of the whole world

world can profit him no more: when, all the indefatigable sons of commerce; they, who have preserved, no less than they, who have bartered conscience and humanity for gold—brought home with curses—shall have passed away; and be removed to a country, where the treasures of the earth are no longer of value.

Did the *man who centers his security in goods laid up for many years*; who finds no other purposes in human life, than “to eat, to drink, and to be merry;” did such an one recollect, that “this night his soul may be required of him; he would learn, that it is not by fairing sumptuously every day, “but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” that life and blessings are bestowed.

Would the *sensualist* consider seriously, that the gratification of his lusts is a happiness very inferior to what his nature

ture is capable of: that his excesses diminish even the vile pleasures he is pursuing: would he remember, that these pleasures are commonly succeeded by sorrow and disgust in the retrospect: that they throw not one ray of hope upon the future: above all, could these reflections persuade him to make trial of those sublime perceptions which result from laudable and spiritual attachments; how would he loathe his earlier corruptions! How tremble for his past depravities! and become fully satisfied, that “to be carnally minded” is death; but, to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.”

Consideration, and a little of that sober thought, which leads to a moral and religious view of the constitution of nature, might prove very wholesome correctives to the errors in characters of every description.

They

They would teach the *prodigal*, that an unremitting course of dissipation and riot, bestowed no true comfort or enjoyment as it passed; and that its consequences are chagrine, and shame, and poverty. That, by his unlimited profuseness, the only virtue with which it is occasionally connected—I mean generosity—is withheld from its natural exertion: for, of kindness and beneficence, frugality is the sure and provident associate.

Opposite to the prodigal, may be placed the *avaricious man*. This does not even say to his soul, “take
“thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.” Ease is far from him. His daily increase of useless wealth, is thrown into that equally increasing stock of irksome cares and endless apprehensions, which render him his own tormentor: “Go to now, ye rich men,
“weep and howl for your miseries,
“that

“ that shall come upon you. Your
“ riches are corrupted, and your gar-
“ ments are moth-eaten. Your gold
“ and silver is cankered, and the rust
“ of them shall be a witness against
“ you, and shall eat your flesh as it
“ were fire. Ye have heaped treasure
“ together for the last days.”*

Such is his portion, who, instead of casting all his care upon God, courts security in riches, and ranks among the covetous, whom God abhorreth.

These few examples, selected from *real* life, are sufficient to illustrate, that the erroneous paths, through which human happiness is sought, are blindly rushed into by the want of reflection, and the shameful abuse of reason. In other words, by *not making futurity the ultimate object, and the divine comforts of religion our present sanctuary.*

* James v.

Turn

Turn we now our attention to those addressed in the words of the text; and let us consider (*secondly*) by what means, they, who leave parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, receive manifold more in the present time.

But, *first*, it must be remarked, that these words, like many other in various parts of scripture, seem to admit both a *literal* and a *figurative* application. As the disciples, who were eye-witnesses of the Saviour, and all his mighty works, enjoyed such advantages of evidence and faith; such lively anticipation of future reward; such assurance of hope, as could not be experienced by christians of succeeding ages; from them, to whom so much was given, much might be justly demanded. Add to this, that it seems to have been indispensably necessary, that they whom the glorious light of christianity had first

G illumined,

illuminated, should testify the certainty of their faith, by their extraordinary exertions, to reflect it upon the hearts of men, and spread it through the world. Accordingly we find, that the apostles of Christ were distinguished by that holy zeal which urged them, in a *literal* sense, to forsake all, take up the cross, and follow their Lord.

But here, you may incline to say, that many of these, instead of receiving manifold *more* in the present time, were deprived of the common blessings of nature: were persecuted from city to city: were one while despised; at another imprisoned: then buffeted: and, “were, of all men, most miserable:” True, if in this world, only, they had had hope in Christ. But, learn to measure the happiness of these men from their own declarations. Learn from them, also, and from the instructions of true philosophy, that human happiness depends
not

not upon the fancied advantages of external condition ; but on those feelings of the mind, which, upon the whole, are prevalent : lo ! *theirs* were full of *immortality*.

St. Paul, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, has with equal force and elegance explained the nature of this self-enjoyment. “ We are
 “ troubled on every side, but not dis-
 “ tressed ; we are perplexed, but not
 “ in despair ; persecuted, but not for-
 “ faken ; cast down, but not destroyed :
 “ always bearing about in the body the
 “ dying of the Lord Jesus, that the
 “ life also of Jesus might be made ma-
 “ nifest in our body.”* And again :
 “ For our light affliction, which is but
 “ for a moment, worketh for us a far
 “ more exceeding and eternal weight
 “ of glory ; while we look not at the
 “ things which are seen, but at the

* Chap. ii.

“ things which are not seen ; for, the
“ things which are seen, are temporal ;
“ but the things which are not seen, are
“ eternal.”

To the same effect St. John writes, in his first General Epistle: “ Marvel
“ not, my brethren, if the world hate
“ you. We know that we have passed
“ from death unto life.”* For, what-
“ soever is born of God, overcometh the
“ world ; and this is the victory that
“ overcometh the world, even our
“ faith. Who is he that overcometh
“ the world, but he that believeth that
“ Jesus is the Son of God ?”† It was, then, by this lively faith ; this glorious anticipation of future happiness, that the disciples of Christ received manifold more *in this present time* : yea, manifold more, than the most splendid or unmolested of mankind ;

* chap. iii.

† ch. v.

who,

who, having taken refuge, either in the short lived security of power; or in the stillness of retirement; might severally pass a life, unconscious of the joys, which spring from the assurance of a glorious immortality.

To minds, awakened by the sure expectation of eternal felicity, every intervening difficulty which this poor world can throw in the way, is easily overcome; while the upright mind is left to rejoice in its triumph, and enjoy the retrospect of an unshaken fidelity. If the first preachers of the gospel were in a peculiar degree exposed to multiplied severities; so were they blessed and supported with that strength of faith, that joy and hope, that internal peace, which amply recompensed them for every distress. Blessed were the eyes which saw, and the ears which heard such things, as *theirs* did.

Nevertheless, it still remains true, that they, unto whom the words of the text may be applied in a *figurative* sense—christians of our own period—it still remains, that while these continue to direct their principal labours to the honour and increase of the kingdom of God; they do absolutely receive manifold more in this present time: while their measure of general happiness bears a proportion to their activity in that important cause they have undertaken.

For, if their faith is less animating than that of an apostle; it is not, on that account, disturbed with doubts; but proves fully sufficient for every purpose of a good life. It is adapted to their situations as members of society upon earth. A greater degree might be unprofitable: might, in many instances, prove hurtful to that moderation and sobriety of mind; by which, as by safe and gentle currents,
the

the usefulness of good men is regularly conveyed to their surrounding brethren.

To view such agreeable and interesting characters in their most advantageous light, let us be thankful that it is not necessary to wander into *distant* countries : perhaps, if candidly inquired for, none of us need go far from home. He becomes a suspected person, who, amidst the circle of his acquaintances, cannot trace, in one of them, the happy effects of religion pursued with some warmth, and observed with steady regularity.

Go, then ! and with reverence inform yourself of such an one's real situation ! Learn his feelings ! his secret and habitual perceptions ! Bring him into comparison with the mere man of this world ! You will then acknowledge, that religion and virtue are the guardians of happiness : that theirs, and theirs only, are ways of pleasantness and lasting satisfaction :

that it is the religious man, and none but he, who can be said to walk agreeably to the first design of God, “ when
“ he created man in his own image,
“ and breathed into his nostrils the
“ breath of life, and he became a living
“ soul.” For, what are the attendants of pure and active religion ! Are they not benevolence to man ; and the more sublime sensations, annexed to such a train of conduct, as is directed to the honour of God and the glory of his kingdom ! Does not the pious man feel a dignity and satisfaction, unknown to moderate virtue ; in the consciousness, that his zeal, authorised by exemplary manners, may become the glorious instrument whereby many of the human race are brought to the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, and made heirs of the kingdom of heaven !

Is he not taught by the gospel of Jesus Christ, by what means, *sin*, the
source

source of misery, is to be destroyed; and the frail children of men recommended as well to the justice as to the mercy of God!

Are not the sacred writings qualified to enlarge the mind, and to instruct it “in all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!” Do they not present us with the grand and progressive plan of God himself, in his government of the natural and the moral world, from the beginning to the present period! Do they not carry us still further; and point to the condition of all created beings; teaching us, that the merits of a Saviour are probably applied to universal existence! “For, it pleased
“the Father, that in *him* should all
“fulness dwell: and having made peace
“through the blood of his cross, by
“him to reconcile *all* things unto him-
“self; by him, I say, whether they
“be things in earth or things in
“heaven.”

Then,

Then, what can bestow such dignity and honour on human nature, as to be admitted so far into the wisdom of Providence, as the humble inquirer advances by the instruction of the scriptures !

But this is the least of his advantages. They administer, on prescribed and reasonable terms, consolation to a wounded conscience, and are able to heal the broken and contrite heart. In them we learn how to be recommended to the favour of God, and thereby reconciled to ourselves.

If these are the effects of religion ; it follows that whoever does not take God into his counsels, and allow a zeal for his honour to hold the leading authority over his scope of action, falls into a state obviously unnatural to man, and becomes a candidate for certain misery.

Flee

Flee, then, to religion, as to the original companion, the natural consolation of man. She will enable you to bear with fortitude whatever is bitter in your cup of life; and carry to his highest relish every innocent and agreeable quality. Let the gospel of Jesus Christ have the dominion of your minds, and the direction of your conduct, and “you will soon know whether its doctrines be of God.” The religion, there prescribed, will, in a great measure, secure you from the passions of *others*; and, what are much worse, from *your own*. It will teach you the true use and estimate of your existence, and bless you with the comforts of a mind at ease. If it is not an infallible preserver from the occasional convulsions of nature; if it does not universally protect its disciples from sword and pestilence; from famine, from inundations and earthquakes; yet doth it whisper, to the pious man, resignation and peace, “by discovering
the

the angel who rides in the storm ;” and by empowering him to rest the care of his soul in that Almighty Sovereign who commands the universe ; and who is able to fortify and console the hearts of his servants, “ though the earth be “ moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea.”

Do afflictions press hard upon us ! Does the envy, or pride, or maliciousness of them who are enemies to peace, undermine our favourite and laudable pursuits ! Do friends, grown languid to our interests, disappoint us by unforeseen, by inconceivable indifference ! What refuge has the dejected spirit, but in a pious reference to *him*, who is “ the helper of the fatherless,” and “ the comforter of those who are cast down !”

When the cold hand of death has touched our dearest, our tenderest connection ; when the prospect of our own approaching

approaching dissolution is spread before our eyes; what, but religion, shall guide our feet from terror as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death; or, while in this world, forbid us “to sorrow as those without hope!”

Religion, is, in its nature and principle, *independent*; lying beyond the reach of accidental contingencies. Its fruits, therefore, not exposed to the influence of unpropitious season, are *certain* and *invariable*. How congenial to human nature these approve themselves to be in the present time, we have endeavoured in some measure to point out. Much yet remains unnoticed. Learn it, then, from the purest and most effectual source of all instruction, your own experience.

But, remember, that the advantages and blessings, however great, which attend your life of active piety in *this* world, are the least important of its
benefits:

benefits : for, you have received it on the authority of your Lord and Saviour; the beloved son of God ; that, in the world to come, your inheritance shall be life everlasting.

SERMON V.

LUKE xiii. 23, 24.

THEN SAID ONE UNTO HIM, LORD, ARE THERE FEW THAT BE SAVED? AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, STRIVE TO ENTER IN AT THE STRAIT GATE; FOR MANY, I SAY UNTO YOU, WILL SEEK TO ENTER IN, AND SHALL NOT BE ABLE.

THAT a great proportion of the sons of men seem little entitled to an entrance by the strait gate, is a melancholy fact, to the truth of which, our reason and judgment, when impartially exerted, are compelled to subscribe.

Even

Even the *ideas*, which the world entertains of happiness, and the means employed in the pursuit of it, are sad proofs, that, in the former, men are as much mistaken, as in the latter they are degenerate, and obstinately insensible to the dictates of conscience, and the injunctions of religion.

The gratifications of lust, avarice and ambition, are the grand points to which the multitude direct their efforts: nor is it any check to this mad career, that the objects cannot be attained without ignoble and vicious practices, and a total disregard to the commandments of God. This general depravity of life and manners certainly exists in what we call the world; and, to the exceeding injury of its members, extinguishes those moral and religious sentiments, which are dear and natural to good men, and by which alone the creature is recommended to the countenance

tenance and blessings of a faithful Creator.

Had the words of my text, then, been directed to the manifestly, wicked and depraved; to the unholy and profane; “to the fools who make a mock
“at sin,” “saying, in their hearts, there
“is no God;” the justness of the sentence would have been obvious, however painful to reflection. But we are now told, that many of those who even *seek* to enter in, shall not be able.

From a contemplation on these words, melancholy may oppress the weak-hearted; cavils and murmurings may arise with the rash and the impetuous; and, till the subject is a little examined, some degree of difficulty be present, to all. The text may also seem contradictory to another passage of scripture; wherein our Saviour saith, “ask, and
“it shall be given you; seek, and ye
H “shall

“ shall find ; knock, and it shall be
“ opened unto you ; for, every one
“ that asketh, receiveth ; and he that
“ seeketh, findeth ; and to him that
“ knocketh, it shall be opened.”*

A proper attention to this important subject, may explain it to our understandings ; and, under the gracious assistance of God, will deliver us from the number of those, who shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

First ; We may assure ourselves, that a Creator, infinitely good, wishes not to withhold from any of his rational offspring, the spiritual blessings which they strive to obtain. On the contrary, nature, and reason, and revelation, teach us to contemplate *him*, as the Almighty parent and preserver of men ; receiving the sincere and reforming pe-

* Matt. vii. 7, 8.

nitent ;

nitent; “pardoning iniquity, and transgression, and sin.”

Again, we are equally certain, that the effectual means of salvation are clearly pointed out to us in the gospel of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and, that by a proper *use* of them, we cannot be disappointed in our hopes of everlasting life. Hence, it is *manifest*, that they, who seek in vain, fail of success, *by failing to learn, and consequently by omitting to practise, the great duties of our most excellent religion.*

That this is the case with many who call themselves christians, a little acquaintance with various religious establishments, might easily suggest to us. These have been too fond of dividing the gospel into parts; of which each has taken a *share*, instead of adopting the *whole*. Determined to commit their future hopes to the strength of their

H 2

prejudices

prejudices, they seek the heavenly man-
sions by the direction of some favourite
doctrines, and the pride of human opi-
nion : while through an enthusiastic re-
gard to these (whatever their tendencies
may be) they lose sight of *general obli-
gation*, and that plan of *regular conduct*
necessary to salvation.

But, instead of making application
to particular sects, which might in this
place be unseasonable, it will be suffi-
cient for the purpose in view, to de-
duce a few remarks from what is or
has been notorious amidst those, of
whatever description, calling them-
selves *christians*.

And here we may observe, that there
have not been wanting some, whose
unsettled notions of religion have
amounted to no more, than visionary
and vain imaginations of a certain *irre-
sistible grace* and *arbitrary election*. Ig-
norant

norant of the true application of these terms, and little conversant in sound divinity, they had forgotten, that their own best endeavours, were to make their “calling and election sure;” and wholly lost sight of the apostle’s admonition, “not to receive the grace of God, *in vain*.”

Pursuing our view of the christian world, what numbers do we observe, who rest their future hopes on a *partial* and *imperfect* fulfilling of the law! One (*e. g.*) derives to himself an entire satisfaction from a tolerable discharge of *moral* duties; neglectful of a sublime and holy religion; a stranger to its dignity; and forgetting, that whatever he does, should result from a *pious principle*, and “be done to the glory of God.” Another hardly exerts himself beyond the *ceremonies* of his church; and feeling small relish in the weightier matters of the law, “judgment,

H 3

mercy

mercy and faith," he fondly hopes, that the merits of his Saviour will justify, or, at least, excuse, the habitual disregard of his MORAL injunctions. But, to such be it known, that the Saviour of the world, "who left us an example that we should follow his steps,"—"went about *doing good*;"—"that *faith* without *works*, is *dead*;" and that of the awful sentence, in the final judgment, when all nations shall be gathered before their King, these will be the words: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For, I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."*

* Matt. xxv. 34—37.

One great purpose of revelation was to do away the doubts and errors, into which mankind had fallen in their search after future happiness: into which *we* also fall, as often as we depart from that safe guide unto our feet, and lanthorn to our paths.

No language but that of the gospel, contains the words of everlasting life: in *it* they are fully transcribed, and levelled to every capacity. The stranger shall not miss of his way: the simple may read and understand; while the wise and learned may gather the sublimest knowledge, the most wholesome instruction, and profoundest truth.

How great, then, are the privileges of all here present, who live in the uninterrupted possession of the holy scriptures? In this “we are the blessed
“ people, who have the Lord for our
“ God.” Suffer me to observe, further, that upon the use we make of this

H 4

great

great advantage, depends our comfort and true enjoyment upon earth, as well as our happiness through eternal ages. Bring forth fruit worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, and at the great day of account it will appear that you have not strove in vain. Let us take care to be doers of the word, and not hearers only; deceiving our own souls; and thence compelling the justice of God to shut the *strait gate* against us. His word instructs us how to ensure our entrance; nor requires more than our reasonable service. "The yoke is easy, and the burden is light." For, what obligations does it lay upon us! what but "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ!" "The keeping our conscience void of offence towards God and towards man:" to which, add the habitual exercise of such moral duties, as we can hardly omit without violence to our minds; and which are
all

all contained in his breast “who loves
“his neighbour as himself.”

Are we then called upon, by our christian covenant, to a discharge of those obligations which are the ornaments of humanity; which even while on earth, bring peace to ourselves, benefit to men, and glory to God; and which, when the term of a few years is expired, will open to us the gate of *everlasting life*! Is this, indeed, “the hope of our calling!” Be it ours to preserve a heart, full of gratitude; and with reverential joy to receive this cup of salvation.

Let no man, or set of men, delude you with vain words, nor fill your minds with wild and dangerous imaginations. Search the scriptures: and, as far as is compatible with human infirmities, persevere in that rule of life, there set before you: and while your own experience,

rience, impartially consulted, convinces you of your falling short of *perfect* obedience; be it your consolation to learn, that the divine sanctification will attend your best and honest *endeavours*; and render acceptable the services of every one, who strives to walk “in the commandments of the Lord blameless.”

The conceits of vain men persuade them into a confidence of being saved their own way; attaching them to those peculiar, but different modes of thinking, set up by themselves. But, my brethren, be it our wisdom, as it is our eternal interests, to prove ourselves by thought, word and deed, the sincere disciples of Christ. Let it be our constant prayer, that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do, and may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same. Let us be careful “to add to our faith, virtue; and
“to virtue, kindness; and to kindness,
“brotherly

“ brotherly love; and to brotherly love,
“ charity ;” and let the foundation of
these excellent qualifications be an af-
fectionate obedience to God. Be ours
the religion of the gospel. The quali-
fications which can save our souls alive
in the great day of account, are there
described in grand and general cha-
racters ; too plain to be overlooked by
any honest inquirer ; and too forcible
to be withstood, but by the wicked
resistance of a degenerate heart. We
are not told, that, blessed is the *reli-*
gious man, deficient in the practice of
MORALITY ; nor, blessed is the *moral*
man, neglecting the duties of RELI-
GION ; neither are any rewards pro-
mised to the high-flown doctrines, or
the zeal of party spirit. But, “ blessed
“ are they which do hunger and thirst
“ after righteousness, for, they shall be
“ filled : blessed are the merciful, for,
“ they shall obtain mercy : blessed are
“ the pure in heart, for, they shall see
“ God :

“ God : blessed are the peace-makers,
“ for, they shall be called the children
“ of God.”*

“ Such shall receive the blessing
“ from the Lord, and righteousness
“ from the God of their salvation.”

* Matt. v.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

PSALM lxxxiv. 12.

AND NO GOOD THING SHALL HE WITHHOLD
FROM THEM THAT LIVE A GODLY LIFE.

THERE is in godliness and virtue something so inviting and so comfortable to the mind, that their not being universally adopted and practised, must surely depend upon an ignorance of the blessings which attend them. It becomes, therefore, incumbent upon every christian, who knows their superior advantages, to take every opportunity of recommending them to his brethren, as well by affectionate remonstrance,

monstrance, as by the conspicuous fruits of a good life.

How can any man so satisfactorily discharge that debt of love, which, by nature, he feels for his dearest connections; for the friend, with whom he has taken sweet counsel; for his fellow men in *general*; as by a lively exertion to make them partakers of that “peace, which passeth all understanding!” With how much tranquillity do we look back on that time which has been so rationally and piously employed! How does the recollection of having made this use of it, mitigate even the pain of separating from those, who are nearest to our hearts, and from whom, though we parted only for a season (it might have been for a short one) many unforeseen circumstances may protract to an uneasy and discomfiting length. But it is more than possible, that, be the season ever so short,

short, our beloved friend is removed from us, or we from him, for ever. Should this be the case, what can bring such relief and hope to an afflicted mind, as to remember—when my departed friend and I were last together, our conversation was of God, and of his great salvation in Jesus Christ.

As subjects of this nature are confessedly the most interesting to the soul; as godliness is the greatest gain even in this world; it appears very extraordinary, that men, who are endowed with the faculty of reason, should so generally misapply it; and, mistaking the true end of their being, forego their best and proper happiness. From whence *this* is to be derived, the text very forcibly expresses, by declaring, that “no good thing shall be withheld from them that live a godly life.”

That this is a most comfortable assurance to the pious man, *all* will
be

be ready to acknowledge. Whoever has forsaken so much of the world as was necessary to be given up, at once for the purpose of preserving his integrity, and of cultivating an holy intercourse with heaven; must feel his joy nearly perfected, in the persuasion, that while he is exercising the sublimest faculties, and gratifying the best feelings of the soul; "his reward is "with him;" for, "that no good thing "is withheld."

But, there are, who would defraud him of this reasonable source of joy and satisfaction. The libertine, who has made no trial of religion, and who fancies he is possessed of certain arguments against it, will tell him, that the words of the text, no doubt, *promise*, very highly; but he does not see how they are supported by facts. For his part, he clearly perceives, that in some instances, the good things of life
are

are merely the result of superior abilities ; more artful address ; or, perhaps, of absolute power : that in other, they spring from accidental contingencies, and the caprice of fortune : that the most amiable, the most worthy, the most devout of human characters, are thrown within reach of the same calamities as other men : that they suffer them as frequently : and that, in short, he does not see any authority for believing, that they, who lead a godly life, are possessed of greater privileges and rewards, than other men.

Such is the result of superficial, false reasoning, in a mind destitute of reflection and piety ; and, perhaps, willing to be deceived by specious appearances.

But, notwithstanding these plausible remarks, the text *asserts*, that “ no good thing shall be withheld from them that live a godly life.”

I

With

With a view to form a judgment on this subject, it becomes necessary to consider the true *meaning* of these words; which will be most easily done, by endeavouring to distinguish between *imaginary* and *real* good.

Imaginary good is as multiplied and various, as the tastes and pursuits of men. To trace it through its several modes, would be to recount the common wanderings and errors of the human mind. We must therefore confine our observations to what is obvious and general.

The imaginary advantages of life may be aptly comprehended, in *wealth*; with its usual attendant, *power*: *prosperous fortune*: and a high *flow* of *health* and *spirits*, to perfect the enjoyment of this distinguished happiness.

These, it will be allowed, are what the man of the world, nay, what almost
any

any man, would esteem the good things of human life. We may go further, and say, that while such advantages are applied to the wholesome purposes which they are intended to serve; while they are made the instruments of honour and of praise to God who gave them; while they operate in diffusing love and kindness to our brethren; while our ardour in benefitting the souls and bodies of men increases with our powers to help them; while our gratitude to heaven is proportioned to our peculiar occasion for it; so long as these things are so, what we have called the objects of *imaginary good*, are converted into *real blessings*. But then, be it remembered, that this blessedness is not attached to the objects themselves; does in no wise necessarily attend them; but is derived solely from the uses to which they are applied. But let us continue.

The first instance of *imaginary good*, is *wealth*.

If we examine the condition of the rich, do we really find them encompassed with more settled happiness, or even more exempt from the common calamities of nature, than they of more moderate circumstances? To compare an excess of wealth with the extreme of poverty, is not necessary to our purpose. It only behoves us now to illustrate, briefly, that wealth is no *positive good*.

To this end, is it not *manifest*, that wealth is frequently so perverted from its proper uses, as to become a burden, a vexation, a source of care, and anxiety, and torture, to the man who possesses it. Either his wants so increase upon his means, that they become boundless; by degrees exceed his resources; oppress him with debts which

which cannot be answered, without the most mean and humiliating compliances ; or else the acquisition of riches induces that immoderate *love* of them, which degenerates into the extreme of avarice. The unhappy inheritor is thus on the one hand exposed to extravagance and disgrace ; on the other, to constant uneasiness, and a state of penury in the midst of abundance. In this manner, “ riches either make to themselves wings and flee away,”—“ or “ are kept by the owners thereof to “ their hurt.”

If we now consider the second instance of imaginary good, (*viz.*) *power*, we shall find it not less imperfect than that already examined. Few characters within the records of history, have borne its plenitude with grace, or applied it unto the beneficial and great ends, to which it might have served. Its abuse has proved general. The

inclination to oppress, or even to destroy, has too commonly attended upon the means of indulging it. Dispositions, once generous and humane, have, by the influx of extraordinary power, suffered very unhappy and fatal changes. That mixture of evil propensity, which is unhappily blended with the worthy properties of the human heart, and which is wont to shew itself in nothing more strongly, than in the lust for conquest and dominion, *power* rouses into action; and, while it spreads a malignant influence on mankind, becomes the venom and the torment of the breast wherein it dwells.

But viewing the condition of power in its less pernicious circumstances; while restrained within the bounds of tolerable lenity and moderation: even while directed to salutary and good ends: still it is situated on a dangerous eminence. Strong temptations

tions are perpetually in prospect. The means of criminal gratification are at hand. The assaults of pride and vain glory, the wicked artifices of subtle flattery, are enemies, hard to be resisted. By these, the little son of power is either wholly overcome and ruined, or degraded into the mean instrument of intriguing courtiers—into a tool, wherewith the man of superior abilities effects his selfish and ambitious purposes.

Again; Is there not in power a deluding charm, which leads to imaginations of self-consequence and security, very foreign to the true condition of human life; which impose upon the mind, and lead it into error; and which, by deceiving us into notions of being raised above the vulgar fate, render those assaults more intolerable, which await us as poor, weak mortals; as helpless creatures; as dying men?

When we now direct our view to the man of worldly *prosperity*, who lives in the uninterrupted smiles, the constant sunshine of fortune ; whose power is so fortunately limited, as to escape the dangers and troubles of pre-eminence ; whose tide of health runs high, supplying the capacity of unrestrained enjoyment ; have we not found the character (whatever be the habits of his life) from whom “ no good thing is withheld ? ” To the hasty observer of men and circumstances, it may seem that we have. But the more cautious examiner, will reply, that in all this fine arrangement of blifs, this seeming fulness of enjoyment, the principal ingredient is wanting, (*viz.*) the assurance of a *moment's continuance*. That this reflection must, alone, throw a distempered chill over the highest seasons of gaiety and delight, if the man of prosperity reflects at all ; and that if he dare not inquire

inquire into the nature of his happiness, it is a happiness not founded in truth and reality, and therefore unworthy the attachment of a reasonable mind.

To him, who can look beyond the present hour, the prosperity of life is but a delusive, a contingent happiness. He sees that one unlucky turn of that precarious wheel which is for ever revolving, may destroy the whole fabrick of those joys, which, in their best estate, are hazardous, fluctuating, and always in danger of an overthrow. Like the house which the foolish man built upon the sand, they fall with the first flood that comes, or wind that blows.

Health, we are ready to acknowledge, is a very considerable qualification in the sum of human felicity; but, it is not sufficient to form, or support it;
neither

neither is it by any means regularly attended by it. Many are the instances of an extraordinary portion of good spirits, cheerfulness, and consequently an increased share of happiness, being lodged in very *infirm* frames of body : while dispiritedness and melancholy frequently oppress the most robust and healthy. It is further observable, that certain constitutions never enjoy so pleasant a state of spirits, as when under the influence of some bodily indisposition. From hence we may fairly infer, that even health, however greatly to be wished, is not a *primary* and *positive* good.

We have thus collected, as concisely as possible, what experience and reason might obviously suggest on these few examples of reputed advantages—*riches, power, prosperity, and health.*

If, as *christians*, we were now to examine their pretensions by the test of
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the scriptures ; we should, in the first place, find it said of *wealth*, “ how hardly shall they who have riches, enter into the kingdom of heaven ! ” Our Saviour explains this, by adding “ how hardly shall they who *trust* in riches, enter into the kingdom of heaven ! ” Even with this qualification, there is reason to fear they are a dangerous inheritance. Few, who possess them, remember their emptiness so thoroughly, as not to place *great* trust in them. The pious and wise man, will, therefore, never make *haste* to be rich ; and if by any means he becomes so, he will consider and use such acquisition, as a good steward the things committed to his care ; as a *means* to an END ; as a charge, for which he must presently be accountable.

If we refer to the sacred writings for the subject of *power* or *greatness*, we shall learn to affix a very moderate value on *these* beloved attainments.

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The qualifications, befitting our condition, as *sinners* and *dying men*, are there shewn to be *meekness*, *humiliation*, *penitence*; prayer for *grace*, and *mercy*, and acceptance of God through Jesus Christ.

The virtues to be cultivated as christians, though far more sublime and difficult than those ever practised, or prescribed, by any other society of men, are, what the pride of life, and the ignorance of the vain, may deem mean and servile. To live by *faith*, and not by *sight*; to place no confidence in our own strength; to be fully convinced of our own unworthiness; to receive the kingdom of heaven, as a *little child*; these are requisitions, which the high in power, indeed, what most men, have too generally lost sight of. But, if man, who is in honour, would be found “to retain understanding, and
“not be compared unto the beasts that
“perish,

“perish,” he will say with the Psalmist,
 “I will not trust in my bow, it is not
 “my sword that shall help me.”—
 “The race is not to the swift, nor the
 “battle to the strong.”—“Some put
 “their trust in chariots, and some
 “in horses; but we will remember
 “the name of the Lord our God.” He
 will, amidst the pomp and splendour
 of station, study to preserve that hu-
 mility which becomes him as a perish-
 able mortal, and which is a principal
 qualification to fit him for the favour
 and acceptance of his Maker.

Prosperous fortune and high health,
 however greatly to be desired, appear,
 when viewed in a religious light, to
 have certain consequences of danger
 attending them, of which the wise and
 pious have in all ages been sufficiently
 aware. Experience teaches, that man
 has frequently proved unequal to stem
 the power of their tide. Its force and
 impetuosity

impetuosity will not allow that leisure and stillness, in which thought delights, and from whence security arises. The man is altogether carried beyond himself; it may be, he is overwhelmed and lost. Such at least, has unhappily been the fate of many.

Again; *Unvaried prosperity*, even where *least* injurious, tends to make man a stranger to *himself*; it removes his faults, nay his *vices* from detection; and is apt to render him forgetful of the true foundation on which his virtues and his hopes ought to be built—the love and fear of God. From this complicated error, have arisen many of the follies and fatalities, incident to the sons of exalted fortune. The mercy of God, therefore, by many mistaken for severity, *varies* the course of things: he holds it good to throw a cloud over that full blaze of sun, which was in danger of destroying. *Adversity* intervenes,

venes, and restores us, if wisely applied, to the graces and virtues which were nearly extinguished. By the exercise of recollection; by solitude; and its natural attendants, thought, meditation, and prayer; it shews men to themselves. The causes of their misadventures, the reasons of their fall, the imperfections of their character, open to their view. Repentance and reformation ensue; and rescue from the destruction which was rapidly approaching. Wherefore every devout man will feel the force and piety of the Psalmist's meditation. "It is good for me that I have been in
" trouble, that I may learn thy sta-
" tutes. Before I was troubled I went
" wrong, but, now, have I kept thy
" law." He will also listen to the exhortation, which speaketh unto us, as to sons: "My son, despise not thou
" the chastening of the Lord; nor
" grieve when thou art rebuked of
" him; for, whom the Lord loveth,
" he

“ he chafteneth, and scourgeth every
“ fon whom he receiveth.”

Uninterrupted health, by a *pious* mind, is, no doubt, received and remembered as a gracious inheritance: it is enjoyed with gratitude; and becomes the heightener of every other good gift. It were ardently to be wished that this piety was universal; but it must, upon the whole, be allowed, that health leads, in some characters, to excessive gaiety, ending in vice: in others, solely to the business and engagements of the world; pursued through channels almost infinite: in the robust and daring, to hazardous and violent enterprizes. In fine, that it is too often spent in various pursuits, very foreign to piety and good morals.

The use and application of these remarks follow very obviously.

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They are designed to persuade all those, who live a godly life, not to be disturbed in hope, or shaken in integrity; to be in no wise cast down; if such good things as we have now considered, are not always their inheritance. For reasons of infinite mercy, it may become necessary to recall them after they have been granted: to confine their enjoyment within narrow bounds: in some cases, to withhold them altogether. The Creator, “whose
“thoughts and ways are above ours,
“even as the heavens are higher than
“the earth,” sees minutely and exactly what each pious character requires, to ripen and perfect its good fruits, and render them acceptable in the day of the Lord.

He “who sendeth us richly all things to enjoy,” is ever ready to grant such share of this world’s advantages, as does not interfere with, and oppose

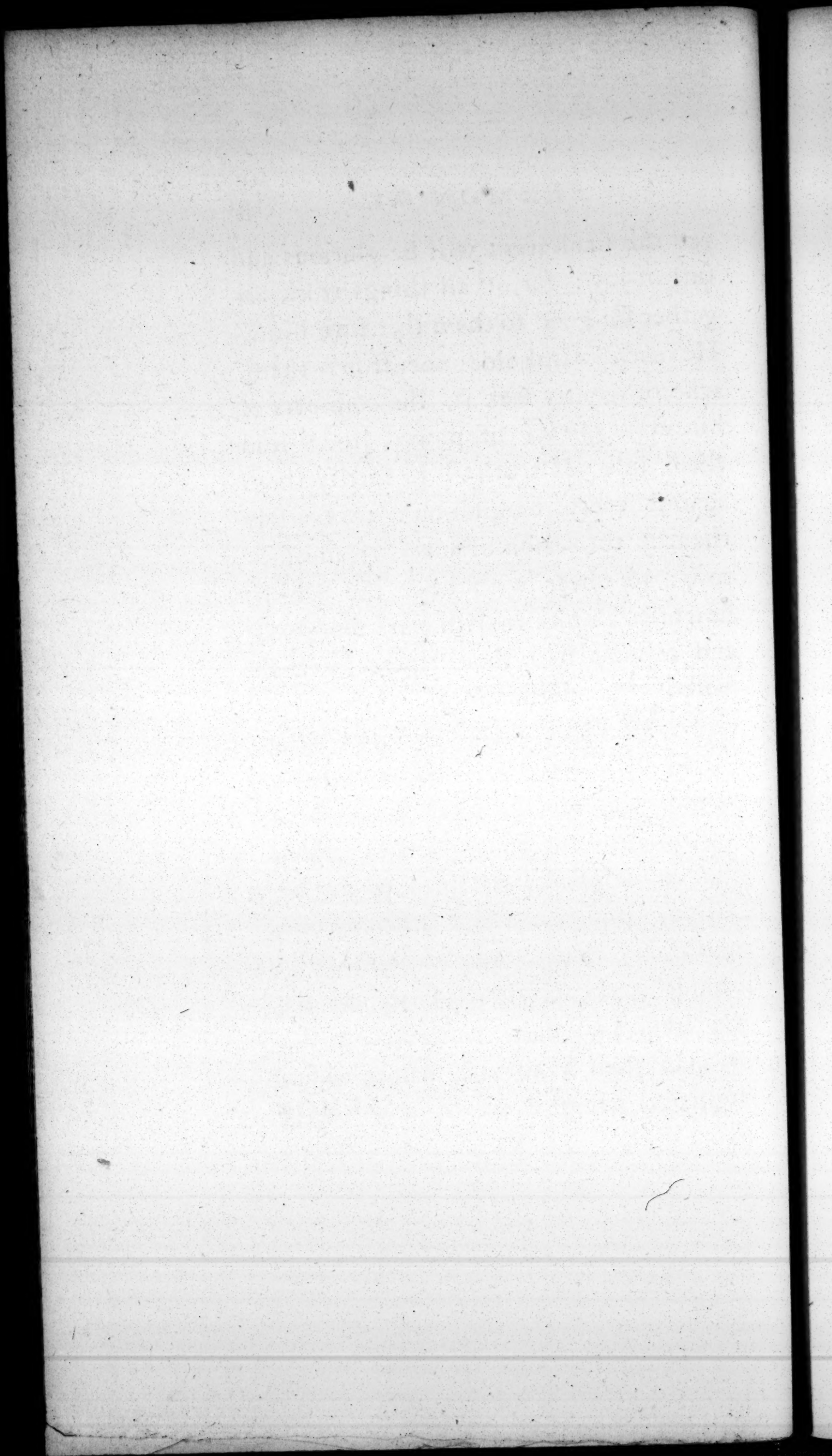
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the interest of that, which will presently be revealed.

He withholds nothing that is truly good, from those who reverence and love him; and who testify that they do so by the habits of their life. He withholds *many* things from them, of which the *world* may think highly; “but the wisdom of the world, is foolishness with God.” He withholds not—the greatest of all blessings—his approbation and favour. He withholds not that joyous looking forward to futurity, which supports the soul in its distress; and substantiates every blessing it enjoys. He withholds not the innocent and pure delights of social and domestic life; nor the sublime cultivation of every moral affection, and immortal faculty. He withholds not the assurance, that, whatever may be the present sources of uneasiness and discouragement to a pious christian,
yet

yet the final event will be glorious and full of joy : for, “ all things work together for good to them that love him.” He even withholds not from them, who diligently seek it, the comforts of his *holy spirit* ; of power, to “ lead them into all truth :” to fortify them against every temptation : to console them in the season of adversity and sorrow : to cheer with hope the aching heart : to inspire it with pure delights ; and to keep it in that “ peace, which passeth all understanding.”



S E R M O N VII.

MARK x. 21.

ONE THING THOU LACKEST.

“**W**HAT shall I do to be saved,” is, of all questions, the most important which can be proposed by man, or answered by his Creator. In the chapter, from whence the text is taken, a certain person is related to have come hastily to Jesus, and with the zeal which the subject inspired, to have addressed him thus; “Good master! “what shall I do that I may inherit “eternal life?”

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In reply to this demand, our Saviour proposes to his observance such of the leading commandments of the law, as might conduce to the great end in view. To this he answers, “master, “all these have I observed from “my youth.” Jesus, beholding! loved him; and said unto him; “One thing “thou lackest: go thy way, sell what- “soever thou hast, and give to the “poor, and thou shalt have treasure “in heaven; and come, take up the “cross, and follow me.” When he “heard that saying, he was sad, and “went away grieved.”

From this short narrative, much useful instruction may be gathered.

The first circumstance, which offers, is the apprehension, instanced by this man's question, that something remained unfulfilled, which was necessary to insure his future happiness: “what shall

shall I do inherit eternal life?" He seems to have been endued with such a degree of self-knowledge and intelligence, as had suggested to him, that a formal observance of the *letter of the law* was insufficient to justify man before God, and restore him to the paradise which had been forfeited by disobedience and sin. "All this he had observed from his youth;" as far as a nature, which is carnal and imperfect, could fulfil a law which is spiritual and perfect. It may be, he was aware of this difficulty. Perhaps he was properly conscious of human degeneracy. At all events, whatever his reasons may have been, his question to Christ imports a suspicion in himself, that his past works were ineffectual to salvation.

We also discover, (secondly) that, in this, he judged correctly: for, notwithstanding his attachment to the

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law,

law, it appears that he had not brought his mind to that spirituality of affection; had not acquired that thirst for immortal happiness, which undefiled religion never fails to inspire. This is obvious from the conclusion of the story: for, having received his answer and instruction from Jesus, instead of eagerly embracing the offer, he was sad, and went away grieved. When Jesus had proposed to him the sure means of securing what *seemed* to be the first, great object of his heart, *eternal life*—he relinquished the pursuit, for the sake of escaping the conditions.

These, you may say, were hard to be endured: “Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor,” contained a violence in its idea, from which his mind might reasonably recoil—by no means.—Is it possible, that a man actually conversing with that glorious person,

person, whose mission he acknowledged to be divine; in whose authority he fully believed; who received from the immediate and living voice of Christ himself a sure promise of eternal life, on such terms as the occasion fully justified; is it possible, that, thus circumstanced, he could have rejected the proposal? That he could have preferred treasures upon *earth*, “where moth and rust doth corrupt,” to the sure, unfading glories of *heaven*, if his affections had been spiritualized, and his heart right with God? This, surely, will not be defended. The contrary is too obvious to admit of any argument. Yet we have good reason to conclude, from the character in which he appears, that he possessed many *estimable qualifications*. That he had a reverence of *God*, is manifest, by his avowed obedience to the authority of his commands. This obedience entitles him to the reputation of hav-

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ing been a just, an upright, a righteous man : such an one, as would, in our days, be accounted, something more than merely a man of MORAL PRINCIPLE ; in as far as the motives of *his* conduct were grounded in a regard to the commandments of God. Yet we are constrained to remark, that, under such qualifications as these, he did not come to Christ with the dispositions requisite to become *his* disciple : therefore, not with a temper of mind suited to the kingdom of heaven.

The example is pointed : and as it is the part of wisdom to avail itself of opportunity, and to profit by experience ; the instruction which it offers, will not pass without benefit to those, who read for knowledge and improvement.

As the words of the text may be found applicable to many among christians,

tians, every serious man will be disposed to examine into his own situation, and to ask — is not this *my* case?

To do this, with a determination to discover and to meet the truth, is one of the noblest instances of human honesty and of manly fortitude. It evinces a mind devoted to consistency, and resolved to “go on unto perfection.”

To relinquish a favourite propensity or darling possession, established by use, and rendered natural by habit, even for the sake of *heaven*, is not so easy a task, nor so commonly complied with, as superficial thinkers may incline to believe. The difficulty of the sacrifice, as far as a single instance can instruct, is most forcibly illustrated by the case we have already considered.

“Let *us* therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into
“rest,

“rest,” any of us should seem to come short of it: for unto *us*, also, is this gospel preached; and it behoves every man to consider well, whether it might not, with truth be said unto him, “One thing thou lackest.”

To the justness of this sentence, perhaps few would be vain enough to object. They would rather admit their deficiencies to be *many*. But though an acknowledgement of self-unworthiness is the first advance towards exaltation; though it may even dispose a merciful judge strongly to *indulgence*; yet, no wise man will suffer a cause of an eternal moment to rest at an uncertain issue, when, by the means which heaven has appointed, he can ensure a judgment in his favour. He will not retire in hope, under a confession of his *imperfections*. He will be earnest in his endeavours; and, if so, he will be successful in his wishes, to “grow
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“in grace,”—“till he comes unto a
“*perfect* man; unto the measure of
“the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

It is here of importance to remark, that the text seems especially to concern those who have made some considerable *advances* in piety and morals; at least such as have testified their respect unto the *written law*, by an observance of its injunctions, and a sober regularity of life. For, it is obvious, from the narrative preceding the text, that the man who came to Jesus, with the momentous question, “what shall I do to inherit eternal life;” was of this character. He had observed, or thought he had observed, those essentials of the law, which Christ rehearsed to him. It is also true that Christ did not object to his assertion. But it appears, that he did not say unto him, “well done, thou good and faithful servant;” fear not;
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thou art therefore perfect: "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" instead of this, knowing the lurking imperfection of a mind not yet rendered spiritual and heavenly, he declares to him, in the language of authority, tempered by gentleness, his real situation;

"One thing thou lackest."

We are hence taught to comprehend the marked distinction between an acquiescence in the *law*; and that lively, zealous devotion of the heart: that longing after heavenly treasures; which purifies the soul, and inspires it with holy and immortal affections. A servile obedience may be rendered to the law, where true heavenly mindedness does not influence the man. Such obedience may possibly be grounded in little more than a cautious attention to appearance; a compliance with general custom; a necessary submission to moral justice; or, at *best*, in a regard to
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the good order and welfare of society. In *unfavourable* instances, it may result from a principle no higher than the bare apprehension of *punishment*.

In the midst of motives, such as these, the perfect work of charity, of piety and benevolence, may, even, not be *begun*. St. Paul distinguishes very aptly between the *righteous* man, for whom “scarcely would one die;” and the *good* man, for whom, “*some would even dare to die.*” The former may be zealous for the law, and strict in his observances. “He may fast twice in “the week, and give tithes of all that “he possesses.” He may also give thanks that he is “not as other men “are; extortioners, unjust, adulter- “ers.” Yet, in all this, he may possibly not be justified. He may, even *yet*, love the world more than his neighbour, or his God. Perhaps he has not yet felt, or cherished those
divine

divine principles of faith, and goodness, which prove the heart to be truly regenerate, and to partake of the spirit of Christ. He may yet retain a carnal mind. His affections may still be so linked to his possessions, that if called upon to dispose them, as his eternal interests, and heaven should direct—“ he would go away grieved.”

As all this is possible, it behoves every man who is earnest in his pursuit of everlasting life, to examine if there be any thing in his temper or attachments, which may unhappily interfere with the attainment of his great object: whether he is in the habit of any *practices*; under the dominion of any *propensities*; which are at variance with heaven: whether, by the diligent use of the grace of God, he has shaken off the ignominious yoke of all vile inclinations; subdued the evil passions of the heart; and disciplined his will to a cheerful

cheerful compliance with the precepts of the gospel, and the dictates of reason.

Above all, as some one *particular* failing is wont to prevail over others, according to the various modification of the human character; he should examine, thoroughly, whether he has extirpated from his heart, this favourite vice; “this sin, that doth so easily beset him;” and is now engaged in a true christian course, “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

The man who thinks not of these things, so as to allow their influence on his mind to equal their importance, must be viewed in a very improvident and dangerous situation, in the survey of faith and wisdom. Yet this is the case of all who permit the cares of this world to enslave their affections; to interfere with the concerns of religion;

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and to divert the soul from her heavenly destination. It would be well if they offered no greater injury than occasional interference. Examples are too general, where they entirely "choak the word, and it becometh unfruitful."

The fact is, that the glorious pursuit of heaven, and a servile attachment to earth, admit of no compromise. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." Either the perishable allurements of the present life, in whatever current of error they may run, or the exalted prospect of a heavenly inheritance will gain a decided preference in our hearts. How miserable an election does that man make, who, having "halted between these two opinions," at length determines for the former!

But, this choice is not the result of reason, judging by comparison. It is not,
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it cannot, by a man professing christianity, be supported by any thing approaching to argument and sense. No, the truth is, that where a penurious regard to the advantages of the world, predominates, on any trying occasion, over the love of God, a virtuous and honourable conduct, and the promise of eternal life; the operation of faith and hope is feeble and precarious: perhaps, entirely wanting: of course, the principle of obedience is languid and conditional: no earnest wish, not even a taste for true happiness, is felt. The desires and pursuits are confined to objects, mean, and carnal, and perishable: and though the man, thus circumstanced and directed, may be a nominal christian, he certainly “has not the spirit of Christ;” therefore cannot be a christian in heart and disposition.

We are constrained to represent unto such an one, the final consequences of

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his situation. We call upon him to *remember*, that the profession of the christian name, without the dispositions of a christian mind, and the operation of christian principles, will avail nothing in that day, when God shall judge the world in righteousness: rather, that they will increase his condemnation.

But, let him also remember, that, to be a christian, *in reality*, it is not requisite to renounce any substantial good, or innocent enjoyment. He is not summoned to unreasonable austerities; to unnatural compliances; nor required to relinquish the smallest of God's blessings. No: the gospel calls to a free and reasonable service. The man who has learnt to "use this world as not abusing it," is not far from that regulation of the heart, in regard to its concerns, which will satisfy the demands of religion. Such an one will

will never forfeit the treasures of heaven by an idolatrous attachment to momentary possession. But, the christian does not stop here. He well knows, that the love of God implies not only a ready forsaking of unprofitable pursuits, but an activity in acquiring the graces of an heavenly mind. He does not only refrain from “ setting his affections on things on the “ earth,” but labours to “ lay up for “ himself treasures in heaven ;” knowing, that “ where his treasure is, there will his heart be also.”

Above all things, he flees from all manner of iniquity; and is diligent in his application for grace to subdue that particular sin, whatever be its nature, with which he is most easily beset.

To the solicitation of criminal pleasures, he opposes this invincible repulse, “ how shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God !”

Of the things that are on the earth, he has formed a just and rational estimate; and brought his love of them within the controul of piety and wisdom. He sees, and not only so, but *acts* from the impression, that “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” will quickly pass away; and while the world offers him all its glories, if he will fall down and worship, he is prepared to defeat the insidious tempter; recollecting, how insignificant are such gains and triumphs, when brought in competition with the loss of the soul; how poor these fugitive gratifications, compared with the favour of that God, “in whose presence is the fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there is pleasure for evermore.”

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

PSALM cxix. Part Sixth, Ver. 5.

AND I WILL WALK AT LIBERTY; FOR I SEEK
THY COMMANDMENTS.

THE love of liberty is a principle fixed and inherent in the human character. Throughout the various stages of life, the desire is observed to operate. It is common to all ranks, as well as to all ages. It lives within the breasts of the zealously virtuous and correct, as well as of the dissolute and irregular. It attaches to the former as a just inheritance of a nature rescued from vicious habits, and devoted by
L 4 inclination,

inclination, no less than by principle, to whatever is laudable and good.

From the universality of this passion, we may be assured, that, like other true and natural instincts, it has its proper destination; and that under certain regulations, it is designed, to be pursued and gratified.

The application of this, as a principle, might first of all be made to man in his state of *civil society*. It might easily be shewn, that a just and impartial distribution of *freedom* is necessary to the prosperity and health of every community. That where freedom is subverted, industry is destroyed; commerce languishes; the bulk of the people sink into sloth and insignificance; the peasantry is impoverished and starved: the spirit of the general mind is broken: while a monopoly of wealth and power exalts the individual
into

into the obnoxious privileges of tyranny and oppression.

Such are the first effects attendant on the destruction of this excellent inheritance.

Nor do these form the total, or even the most pernicious of its evils. It is yet to be observed, that with the death of freedom, every object of laudable emulation perishes in the general ruin: man has no longer an useful or a dignified character to sustain: the incitements even to virtue, are few and feeble; the recompense of distinguished merit, and of public worth is withheld, or precarious: while the operations of mercy and of justice are accidental and fallible, because they are partial and capricious.

To a state, thus circumstanced, the common blessings of peace become the
most

most deadly of hostilities. It is fitted only for perpetual warfare. The moment it is at ease, that general dissipation, which results from insignificance of character, and ends in relaxation of morals, begins to operate; and unless some wholesome regulation interposes, is sure to work its decline and downfall; or to render it useless to itself, and despicable in the balance of nations.

For the truth of these observations we may refer to the history of empires that are passed, or to those which are now revolving. Amongst these, can we point to a *single* one, which has endured a reasonable test of time, and has preserved its importance, under the combined influence of *despotism* and *peace*!

The farther we extend our inquiries, the stronger will be our conviction,

tion, that the loss of civil freedom is the destruction of public virtue; and the sure introduction of those frivolous and unmanly occupations, which degenerate into entire indolence, and end in abandoned principle.

From this short sketch of so great a subject, we may learn to appreciate the exceeding advantages of "walking at liberty," if applied to man as a member of political establishment.

But the *liberty* which the Psalmist claims as *his* portion and inheritance, is of a nature still more pure and more exalted. "I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy commandments."

His pretensions to this privilege are founded upon the devotion and obedience of his mind and purpose, to the will and service of God. It is this condition of the heart and affections
alone,

alone, which can bring unto a man that perfect freedom, for which, in another place, the Psalmist so emphatically prays. "O give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free spirit."

We see then that the liberty, asserted in the text, is attached to the spirit and the pursuit of *true religion and virtue*. And the text imports, that the man, who is truly influenced by these divine principles, has a well founded *claim* to such sublime reward.

To inquire into the reasonableness and propriety of this, will prove the easiest method of illustrating the subject.

When we attend to the scripture history of man, we learn, that in his first estate, he was exempt from laws and ordinances; had no knowledge of
evil

evil and of sin; but was committed to the enjoyment of a nature that was free, in the bliss and innocence of paradise. One *prohibition*, the test of his obedience, was enjoined by his Creator. By the observance of this, his reverence and allegiance were to be testified, and his happiness secured. The event, and its fatal consequences, are too well known to require any detail.

From this unhappy period, marked by the forfeiture of innocence and the punishment of sin, we read of many and immediate communications between man and his Creator: as with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and his descendants: making up that measure of time, generally understood by the *patriarchal age*; and which may be said to have closed with the death of Joseph and his brethren, in the land of Egypt. Throughout this extensive period, human nature

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was still left free from the injunction of all positive law, this alone excepted: "whoſo ſheddeth man's blood, by man ſhall his blood be ſhed."* It was not till the full trial had been made of man, and the multiplication of crimes called for the interpoſition of heaven, that thoſe formidable *tables*, "written by the finger of God," were promulged, which aſcertained the meaſure of *divine* and *moral obligation*; and, as St. Paul argues, that by the commandment ſin became exceeding ſinful.†

From the ſame apoſtle we learn that while the commandment, is, as every thing muſt be from the appointment of the divine Governor, "holy, and juſt, and good;" yet, by the fallen condition of mankind, it could not operate with that regularity and vigour

* Gen. ix. 6.

† Rom. vii. 13.

upon the *natural* mind, by which a lively and a perfect obedience might be produced ; and life and immortality follow in consequence and reward.

The law, taken rigidly in the letter, should be considered rather as a *condemnation of transgression* ; a testimony of the Creator's abhorrence of iniquity, than as a preventive of those evils, and a covenant of ultimate salvation. Whence can this be ! Is it from any imperfection in its own nature ? That can never explain the difficulty. It is " written with the finger of God." It is not because it is *imperfect*, but because it is *perfect*, that its operation is unfriendly to the human race. Imperfect natures must for ever fail of an entire compliance to a code of perfect rules. While the law condemns sin, it unavoidably confirms us in the knowledge of it ; and in discovering to every attentive man, the irregular tendencies
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of the heart, rather declares the virulence of iniquity, than furnishes the power of subduing it. I speak of the written law, as applied to the mere, natural man, unacquainted with his own corruption; but who nevertheless expects to be justified by a partial obedience to those commands; by which, if the most correct life on earth was to be severely tried, it would be found defective; and the command, itself, in a literal sense, would prove to be—ordained unto death.* It would do this, because it bears testimony to natural sin, without abolishing the principle: for, even yet, where is the just man, who hath perfectly fulfilled the law, who hath in all things lived an unspotted life, and sinned not?

But, to those, who are spiritually minded; who contemplate the law in its proper office and design; who,

* Rom. vii. 10.

through

through the perfection which it requires, detect their own inability, and the necessity of the intercession of a Saviour: to such as these, its operation is friendly; and administers to the great purposes, for which it was ordained. To these, in the phrase of the apostle, it has proved "the school-master, to bring them to Christ."

That this was the great intended end of the Mosaic dispensation, is obvious from the whole tenour of the New Testament. But is there any error or unrighteousness in the law itself? Is the law, sin? God forbid! No: the law is just and good. It proceeded from the great source of perspicuity and truth. It is the corruption of the heart; the insufficiency of the mind to regulate the passions; which is the true source of human miscarriage. For this, the remedy is not to be obtained in the ministration

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of the law, but in the efficacy of that “better covenant; established upon better promises;” which is the end and fulfilling of the law, and of all righteousness.

The promise of this covenant, though obscure, bears an antiquity equal to the fall of man. It was, with greater clearness, declared unto Abraham: was progressively revealed unto the prophets: and at length fully manifested by the dispensation of the gospel.

From this passing view of so grand and eventful an history, it appears that the original condition of the human race was exempt from laws and ordinances: that *this* was their state of innocence and happiness: that the introduction of law presupposes a state of delinquency and sin: that, as St. Paul observes, “it was added, because
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of transgressions ;” * and that, like the Jewish sacrifices, it “ can never make the comers thereunto perfect.”

That all this is implied in the spirit and genius of the christian dispensation is certain and demonstrable. It is clear and explicit, in teaching, that salvation is not perfected by the works of the law, but, by “ repentance towards “ God, and faith in our Lord Jesus “ Christ.”

But it is not in the New Testament only, that we can trace this doctrine. Whoever studies the scriptures of the earlier prophets, will easily observe, that, in them, the empire of faith, and righteousness, and freedom, is comprehended and announced. They felt, with rapture, and have expressed in the full force of nature and sublimity, the powers of that holy influ-

* Gal. iii. 19.

ence, which is emphatically called,
“ the circumcision of the heart in the
“ spirit ; whose praise is not of men,
“ but of God.”

Of this, the royal Psalmist has furnished numerous instances, amidst those heavenly meditations, with which the christian church is edified and adorned.

From the single sentence which composes the text, we obviously collect that he esteemed a state of *freedom* to be the natural alliance of “ pure and undefiled religion.” — “ I will
“ walk at liberty, for I seek thy commandments.”

We discern in this expression, a mind animated with the most lively hope and trust in God ; and exulting in that freedom of soul and spirit, which is the result of a religious confidence,

dence, formed and supported by habitual intercourse with heaven.

From the heart, thus disciplined, and devoted, the restrictions and bondage of law may be safely withdrawn. Out of its own good treasures it will spontaneously bring forth good things.

This state of freedom, is, throughout the plan of the gospel, so constantly connected with a state of regeneration and of grace, that, to be a christian in spirit and in truth, implies not only a knowledge of the *fact*, but a lively consciousness of the *principle*. To be a christian, comprehends an effectual participation of faith and righteousness. Concerning *evil*, it enjoins simplicity. It implies a resemblance of that blissful condition of our first parents, yet in paradise, when ignorance of crime superseded the necessity of laws. It is to

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such

such a state as this, but far exceeding in glory and happiness, that christianity, properly understood, would conduct its true disciples. It delights in the spiritualized affections and virtues of the heart; not in the cold observance of the letter. It is the purifier of the mind. The cement of the soul with God. By the gospel we are called unto liberty. But, let every man beware, not to use this liberty “for an occasion to the flesh; nor as a cloak of maliciousness; but as the servant of God.” Let us, indeed, stand fast in such glorious liberty; for, it is Christ who hath made us free. But let us remember, that we renounce this high and inestimable privilege, unless we not only refrain from, but have an utter abhorrence of all iniquity; of every evil work. Whoever lives in the commission of sin; whatever be its kind; whatever direction it may take; is the servant of sin; and is entangled in
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in the heaviest yoke of all possible bondage. It is only "where the spirit of the Lord is,"* that liberty exists. By whom, then, can it be perceived, but by "the pure in heart." Such are they to whom Christ hath declared; "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."† Ye shall escape the many vain, and burdensome, and, superstitious ceremonies, which oppress less enlightened minds; and, instead of suffering the embarrassment of troublesome ordinances, "which, all, are to perish with the using," shall discern, in an opened and informed understanding, that "to the pure all things are pure:" that the spirit of piety, is a loving, and a free spirit: and that the religion of Christ, does not administer a code of laws unto condemnation; but, unto the penitent and humble, a dispensation of grace and mercy, unto everlasting salvation.

* 2 Cor. iii. 17.

† John viii. 32.

Christianity incites, by every motive which can be offered, to “whatsoever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.”—“If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,” it calls upon us, most ardently, to “think of these things.” It ennobles the whole, by urging us so to speak and do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.*

The pursuits of the pious man, acting upon such a liberal system of religion as is here presented, are benevolent and grand. He lives to the glory of God, and the benefit of *his* rational offspring. The advantages and comforts which derive from principles so pure and honourable, rest not on precarious fortune. They are safe, and permanent. The outrageous passions of violent men may indeed disturb, but cannot overthrow them. They

* James ii. 12.

are lodged within the soul, and, like itself, are immortal. They are the blessed portion of its inheritance, while it continues in the body; and, with it, will take their heavenly flight, in the moment of that awful, but triumphant change, when “the creature
“itself shall be delivered from this
“bondage of corruption, into the *glorious liberty* of the children of
“God.”*

* Rom. viii. 21.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

EPHESIANS ii. 19.

NOW THEREFORE YE ARE NO MORE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, BUT FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS, AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.

THE apostle having previously taken a view of the majesty and the high office of Christ, proceeds, in the chapter before us, to remind the Ephesians of the state they had been in, before they had received the gospel. Their natural condition wears a melancholy and deplorable aspect. It is, “that
“ they were dead in trespasses and sins;
“ aliens

“ aliens from the common wealth of
“ Israel; strangers to the covenant of
“ promise; having no hope, and with-
“ out God in the world.” But now
that “ middle wall of partition,” which
had so long separated the Jew and
Gentile, was broken down; the gos-
pel of Jesus Christ was declared unto
them, and publishing to the whole
world; and the Gentiles were no longer
to be accounted “ strangers and foreign-
“ ers, but fellow-citizens with the
“ saints and of the household of God.”
It is upon this, and other scriptures of
like import, that one of the articles in
the apostles’ creed is founded; and ex-
pressed by the phrase, “ communion
of saints.”

The meaning of this will be gra-
dually, and not unnaturally traced, first
of all, by viewing mankind in that
state, to which they are led at once by
inclination and necessity; and by
which,

which, they, in great measure, maintain their distinguished pre-eminence in the rank of creation. I mean, *well regulated society*.

This is the first advance to a more exalted union; and forms that civil communion among men, whereby the necessities of life are more easily supplied, and every branch of useful knowledge gradually extended and improved. From the almost infinite communications, encouragements, and occasions of laudable emulation, which spring from social intercourse, the excellence of the human faculties is progressively discovered; and by an exercise, proportioned to its strength, conducted to that perfection which it is suited to attain. Yet more, society has a kindly influence in softening our manners, and cherishing our minds; in endearing us to each other, and rendering us of superior consequence
to

to ourselves. In a word, society seems necessary to the happiness and preservation of man; and is therefore to be esteemed an institution, coming from the great Parent of creation and order.

How great then is the criminality of those who live in the daily commission of such vices, or the profession of such principles, as tend to impair and to destroy this sacred establishment! who, by a general indecency in conversation and behaviour, compel virtue and religion to seek shelter in *obscurity*; and, as far as they are able, oppose the purposes of heaven, by the incorrectness of their lives!

But, howsoever various the characters of great communities; howsoever dangerous those allurements to vice, with which they abound; yet, by that regard to civil order which they require; by the wisdom of the laws

laws which they enforce; and by the protection they afford to individuals; such communities furnish the means whereby the *well disposed* make great advances in piety and morals. The good and the reflecting, alive to every opportunity which favours the interests of religion, avail themselves of these high advantages; and do honour to the cause of social order, by promoting the growth of christian knowledge, under its protecting arms. It is such characters as these, who are qualified to instruct the licentious, the dissolute, the wicked; that human intercourse by no means implies human depravity; but that the evil is of their own seeking: the offspring of an unchastened, an unregenerate heart. Amidst the peaceful occupations of social and well ordered life, the *pure in heart* pursue with zeal, and with delight, the duties which result from an holy faith. They have diligently sought, and suitably obtained

obtained a portion of that effectual help and grace, which enables them to persevere in the paths of righteousness and “to shine as lights in the world.” They may be esteemed to hold a peculiar fellowship one with another. They have imbibed the same abhorrence of what is immoral and profane: an equal delight in “whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of good report.” They have embraced the same tenets, not heedlessly and as matters of course, but upon examination and conviction. They are not *nominal* christians only, but of the number of those who, having searched the scriptures, and endeavoured to “prove all things, hold fast “that which is good.”

Such characters as these are not confined to the limitation of any *established church* or *tolerated sect*. They are to be found, as the preserving salt, among the valuable of *all* persuasions. They do
not,

not, say, “ we are of Paul, and we of Apollos.” No: they who hope to be accounted worthy of the resurrection, must be able to say we are of *Christ*. In him not only the attachment to peculiar modes will avail nothing; but we are told, that “ in Christ Jesus “ there is neither Greek nor Jew, there “ is neither Barbarian, Scythian, bond “ nor free.”* — “ Neither circumcision “ availeth any thing, nor uncircumci- “ sion.” These distinctions will not profit any man. All that can avail in Christ, is a “ new creature.”† They alone will be reckoned among the Israel of God, who, by regular applications to the throne of grace, for victory over every temptation to sin, are by degrees established, strengthened, settled, in habits of piety and virtue; in that faith which worketh by love; who walk worthy of the

* Coloss. iii. 11.

† Gal. vi. 15.

high vocation whereby they are called : who pursue the things that are more excellent ; who, “ go on from strength to strength ; ” who have laid hold of the covenant ; and who really strive to conform their lives to the precepts of their Lord and Saviour. With equal truth and elegance, such as these, are, by the apostle Paul, termed “ new creatures.”

With what sacred admiration does the human mind contemplate a society of good men ! How interesting, how gratifying to mark that kindly and never failing bond of union which connects in one holy communion the souls of all true disciples of Jesus Christ ! They are to be distinguished from mere *formalists* in religion, by the fruits they produce ; by the humility and singleness of their hearts ; by the chastity of their conversation ; by the correctness and usefulness of their lives ;

lives; by their reverence of God; their active benevolence to men; by that "charity which is the bond of perfectness," and the badge of a christian; and finally, by their conspicuous love one of another. Characters, of this description, have the witness in themselves, that, "they are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

The sense in which these words may be understood, appears to be two-fold: *first*, as it implies a christian fellowship amidst pious men upon earth; and, *secondly*, as it may also infer an holy and more sublime relation between the souls of the good in this world, and those of just men made perfect, in the world of spirits. From this difference of condition, in which we may consider the household of God, some observations may be deduced, applicable to all those who are engaged in a christian course of life.

It may not prove unseasonable, to represent to their "pure minds," that if their heavenly Father hath declared, "he will never leave them, nor forsake them;" it is *their's* to remember, that this comfortable promise supposes a continuance on their part in the ways of true religion and virtue. They will not fail to recollect, that their day of probation is not yet completed; that temptations have not yet wholly ceased to assault. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall," is an admonition applicable to all men living. In a world where there is so much error and folly to seduce; so much vice to infect; where the prevalence of bad example is so dangerous and so fatal; it is highly expedient for every christian to employ an unceasing circumspection, lest he should be insensibly "led away with the errors of the wicked, and fall from his own steadfastness." Notwithstanding the progress

progress made by good men in piety and virtue, every cautious observer will often call to remembrance, the many monuments of human frailty, with which the history of mortality so copiously abounds. Instead of accounting himself “to have attained, or to be already perfect;” he will hearken to the exhortations, which instruct all men to “watch and be sober:” to “pass the time of their sojourning here in fear;” “to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.” Cautions, such as these, should be present to the minds of all true christians, or *saints*, while they are running “the race which is set before them;” and while, “by faith and patience, they seem, as it were, already to inherit “the promises.”

It may be proper to remark, that the terms *saint*, and *holy*, have the same signification: and that the former includes all, who are christians in sincerity: that

though their *peculiar* communion is certainly with those of the same precious faith and character as themselves; yet their benevolence, their charity, their kind offices, are, by the very spirit of their religion, pledged to all mankind. None ought to be excluded from christian fellowship, but the determined and avowed enemies of the christian faith.

After this view of an *universal, pious society* in this life, our thoughts would naturally aspire to those illustrious patterns of religious excellence, who are removed from “the earthly house” of this tabernacle, to an house, not “made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” By the words of the text it appears reasonable to infer, that the writer meant to comprehend in the same communion, to bring into one family, all that are sanctified, in heaven and on earth. Other passages
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of scripture might be instanced in support of the same doctrine; especially from the same apostle.

From a contemplation on this our spiritual, though invisible union with exalted souls, much might be drawn, strongly persuasive to "all holy conversation and godliness." But, to dwell upon this sublime and endearing sentiment, is unnecessary. *They* will best apply it to their own bosoms, who, with the eye of steady faith, already behold in bliss, those estimable characters, whom they have tenderly loved and revered upon earth.

Instead of sorrowing, then, "as those who have no hope;" must not christians "rejoice, with joy unspeakable," in the lively hope of a future *reunion* to those dear friends, who have "obtained the end of their faith, even "the salvation of their souls!" How glorious is the representation given in

the Epistle to the Hebrews, appertaining to this grand and momentous occasion !

“ Ye are come to Mount Sion, and
“ unto the city of the living God, the
“ heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels ; to the
“ general assembly and church of the
“ first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all ;
“ and to the spirits of just men made
“ perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of
“ the new covenant.”*

In proportion as we are exalted in our minds ; as we are ardent in our wishes to be one with this *blessed communion* ; we shall cultivate those habits of holiness and purity, which alone can ensure us a merciful reception ; or, what is a serious thought, create within us any *capacity* of heavenly

* Chap. xii.

enjoyment.

enjoyment. And, finally, as it is the eager desire of our hearts to be restored to that endearing intercourse, which we have formerly cherished with those beloved and exemplary persons, who are now clothed with immortality; we shall be zealous in “ blessing God’s
“ holy name for his servants departed
“ this life in his faith and fear; be-
“ seeching him to give *us* grace, so to
“ follow their good examples, that,
“ with *them*, *we* may be partakers of
“ his heavenly kingdom.”

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S E R M O N X.

MATTHEW v. 4.

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN, FOR THEY
SHALL BE COMFORTED.

WHOEVER has directed his mind to the contemplation of the moral world, has consequently marked the great variety of character by which it is composed.

The diversity of tastes, obvious among men, is evinced by the contrariety of their pursuits, and their uniform perseverance in peculiar habits. Nor are they more distinguished by
their

their variableness in taste and sentiment, than by their manifest inequality in genius and ability. In this respect the distance between men appears astonishingly great, when we consider them as creatures of the same species, holding one and the same rank in the great scale of being.

As they differ in their degrees of intellect, so do they also in their conditions of fortune and advantage. Society requires subordination; and the great Author of regularity and order, has most wonderfully adapted to their office, the various parts by which it is sustained.

From the highest point of elevation, attainable in this grand œconomy, to the extremest degradation, we find that every place is occupied; and, that, notwithstanding the vast disparity of situation, such a general satisfaction,
upon

upon the whole, prevails, as operates, to the combination and welfare of the establishment.

Various other differences, which exist among men, might here be observed upon; but this would lead from the proposed topic of discourse: we therefore omit them; and proceed to notice that striking variety in the human mind, which is more nearly connected with our subject. I mean that pointed contrast in its *natural constitution*, by whose wholesome, or whose baneful influence, the happiness of life may be either cherished or destroyed.

To attempt a philosophical, a physical explanation of this, is not, in this place, convenient or necessary. It is enough to appeal to fact, that such variety does exist; and that it manifests itself by disposing one man to a state of habitual *cheerfulness* and *comfort*;

fort ; by oppressing another with a general cast of *melancholy* and *despondence*.

This being allowed, it must appear, that they who partake by nature of the *melancholic temperament*, are placed in circumstances comparatively wretched. If opposed to those of a contrary tendency, they may be considered as in a state of positive misery. At the same time, when we study the dispositions ; when we search into the hearts of such people as these ; we find them peculiarly amiable and good. We may even discover, that an increased degree of sensibility and tenderness is the secret source of their anxieties and sorrows.

The operation of this, as it disposes to melancholy, so is it ever constant and active in preserving it. By whatever objects the mind is attracted, it still communicates the tinge of its own complexion.

Thence

Thence it is, that general speculation becomes grievous and afflicting: and the mournful mind cannot muse upon any prospect, which she has not previously overspread with her own gloom of colouring. It happens, too, that a cast of melancholy for ever inclines to the contemplation of great and important topics; and fosters that anxious spirit of inquiry, which is perpetually tracing moral consequences, by painful efforts of vain investigation, to their great and primary causes. Nay this cast of melancholy is what principally induces to intense thought; and is a usual attendant at once upon a good heart and an exalted genius.

It is not to be imagined by an insensible mind, what an anxious one endures at the sight of present suffering; nor how it mourns unobserved and unsuspected, while it broods upon those various sorrows of mankind, to which its powers of relief cannot possibly extend.

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To a mind, thus constituted, thus active in its search for subjects of unhappiness, it must be acknowledged that the circumstances of human life supply abundant sources of miserable indulgence. But an attempt to enumerate the causes of disquietude; to recount "all the evil which is done under the sun," would prove as endless, as unprofitable. It may, however, be reduced to one common principle, and well known term; the existence of *moral evil*.

This, though the secret, is the ever-flowing source of that ingenuous sorrow, which lodges in the breast of the mourner. Himself detached from the vain and wicked pursuits of the multitude; exalted in his views; pure in his heart; generous, gentle and benevolent; his thoughts and his desires lead to innocence and peace: to the delightful contemplation of the wonderful

derful works of God. In these he finds eternal variety, and never ceasing occasions of astonishment and praise. He sees that there is no end of their greatness. In the perishable acquisitions of this world, he finds no consolation. The only anxiety of his heart is to see righteousness and happiness established throughout the moral kingdom of God. But, because iniquity, and violence, and wretchedness abound, "sorrow hath filled his heart."

Such affections, and such sorrows, are the most sublime and laudable which can actuate the human breast. It is true, that they have not their portion in this world. Their objects are not here attainable. They require a perfect work. But is there no consolation? no hope? no trust? no confidence? Yes, thanks be to God, the day spring, revelation from

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on high, hath visited us. To mourners, such as these, it is mercifully and intimately addressed. It is accommodated to the peculiar tenderness of their minds. If wisely and modestly received, it will soothe their breasts, and teach them "in patience to possess their souls." By habituating them to an humble and pious intercourse with heaven, it will insensibly lead from objects of *sight* and *observation*, to those of *faith* and *hope*. The sufferings of the present time will therefore make fainter impressions on their minds. The *religious principle* will gradually prevail, and will moderate their anxieties, by inclining them to refer all things to God; "to cast all their care upon him;" and will gradually infuse into the bosom, where gentleness and piety inhabit, increasing portions of "that peace, which passeth all understanding."

So

So far the true disciple of Jesus Christ will taste the healing power of religion amidst the inquietudes and distempers of human life. But, his perfect consolation, when "all tears shall be wiped away from his eyes,"* is reserved for that glorious and approaching period, promised in the scriptures, and emphatically termed by St. Peter, the "restitution of all things."† It is then, that they who have sowed in tears, from whatever occasions of godly sorrow, shall reap in joy. It is then, that the state, agreeable to the tastes and dispositions of beneficent spirits, shall be revealed; and themselves eternally blessed in "the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

We have thus considered the anxieties and sorrows which appertain to a

* Rev. xxi. 4. † Acts iii. 21.

good and amiable mind, when connected with the native evil of a melancholic constitution: and to this, as a most distinguished instance of misfortune, and subject for commiseration, we would especially apply the benediction in the text, “blessed are they
“that mourn, for they shall be com-
“forted.”

But, the observer of the human character quickly perceives, that the overflowing of virtuous sorrow is not nourished by a single source; that the mourners are not comprehended in one class only. There is a variety in grief, as well as in character. Perhaps, that, which we have already considered, may be the most dignified and pitiable, because it is unmixed with any selfish concern, and has had no share in inducing its own distress. But, God forbid, that we should pass on with inattention from the troubled bosom, whatever

whatever may be the nature of its adversity and pain. Though the exaltation and purity of that grief, which, in a tender mind, springs from the view of human corruption, and of human woes; though dejection, such as this, should attract our liveliest admiration and concern; though we should even think, that, to it, more immediately, our Saviour addresses the consolation in the text; yet the gracious encouragement of scripture extends to every instance of godly sorrow, however private and personal the occasion.

First, it seems very pointedly to include the sincere and humble *penitent*, how grievous soever may be the sins which he bewails, if, in the truly christian character, he now abhors iniquity, because it is hateful in the sight of God; is pernicious to his own nature; is subversive of all order, and peace, and happiness; and, finally, be-

cause to redeem mankind from its dreadful consequences, a sacrifice of no less price has been made than the precious blood of Christ.

To the sinner, impressed with such sentiments and persuasions as these, the scripture holds out that language of *mercy*, which proceeds from love and power infinite. The Lord himself hath "passed by," and hath proclaimed; "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful
"and gracious, long suffering and
"abundant in goodness and truth,
"keeping mercy for thousands, for-
"giving iniquity, and transgression,
"and sin."*

Again, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, the Almighty thus powerfully calls the sinner to repentance and to hope: "Come now and let us reason to-

* Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7.

" gether

“ gether, faith the Lord : though your
 “ sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white
 “ as snow ; though they be red like
 “ crimson, they shall be as wool. If
 “ ye be willing and obedient, ye shall
 “ eat the good of the land.”*

In the New Testament, more especially, we find the strongest assurances of mercy to penitence of heart, when proved to be sincere by a corresponding reformation of life. The texts, which might be cited in proof, are numerous and decisive. It may prove sufficient to instance a very few: “ This
 “ is a faithful saying, and worthy of
 “ all acceptation, that Christ Jesus
 “ came into the world to save sin-
 “ ners.”† We are moreover assured that Christ “ is able to save them to
 “ the *uttermost*, that come unto God
 “ by *him* ; seeing he ever liveth to

* Ch. i. 18, 19.

† 1 Tim. i. 15.

“ make intercession for them.”* We are also reminded, that “ we have not “ an high priest who cannot be touched “ with the feeling of our infirmities,” and are thence exhorted to “ come boldly to the throne of grace.”† If we confess our sins, saith St. John, “ he is faithful and just to forgive us “ our sins, and to cleanse us from all “ unrighteousness.”‡ And, that no encouragement might be wanting, we have the most gracious invitations to mercy and acceptance from Christ himself, in various parts of all the gospels. “ The son of man,” he declares, “ is “ come to seek and to save that which “ was lost.”—“ Him that cometh to “ me I will in no wise cast out.”|| And again: “ For God so loved the world “ that he gave his only begotten Son, “ that whosoever believeth in him

* Heb. vii. 25.

† Heb. xv. 16.

‡ Epistle i. 9.

|| John vi. 37.

“ should

“ should not perish, but have everlasting life. For, God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” *

It is thus that the scriptures speak unto the true penitent, in whom sorrowing is connected with fear : yea, “ blessed are they who thus mourn ; for they shall be comforted.”

Again, it applies to such, as, having, through the diligent use of God’s grace, “ escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust ;” and having gone on from strength to strength in the habits of a good and pious life ; may yet be sorrowing, that, in all things, they are not as perfect in their *conduct*, as they are in *taste* and in *desire*.

* John iii. 16, 17.

To *these*, so fully conscious of their frailties, the gospel very forcibly adapts itself. It teaches, that where the ardent desire, the strenuous effort to attain unto perfection, really lives and operates, the pure in heart shall not be disappointed of their hope and their reward. Much might be brought forward from the sacred page in illustration of this comfortable doctrine; but the following passage taken from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, applies so directly to our purpose, as to supersede the necessity of any further reference. "I find then a law, that
" when I would do good, evil is pre-
" sent with me: For I delight in the
" law of God, after the inner man:
" but I see another law in my mem-
" bers, warring against the law of my
" mind, and bringing me into captivity
" to the law of sin. O wretched man
" that I am, who shall deliver me from
" the

“ the body of this death ! I thank God
“ through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Such is the brief application of certain conspicuous passages of scripture, to those select characters, whom the text seems peculiarly to comprehend.

But, they who require every consolation and support which can be drawn from the inexhaustible treasures of revelation, are not confined to a *few* examples. They form a varied and extensive multitude. Even godly sorrowers are many. Howsoever limited may be our intercourse with human life, most of us have observed many pitiable instances of virtuous and tender woe. We have marked the sorrow with which the death of beloved friends has wrung the hearts of those, who were left to mourn that loss, which nothing could restore.

* Rom. vii.

We

We have seen, or have known from certain testimony, many sad instances of worth and virtue, languishing in solitude, or urged by prosperous violence. We cannot be unacquainted with the numerous grievances which fall upon the impotent and friendless from the unrighteous exercise of abused power. The sorrows of misfortune are not of small account. The child is frequently born under that load of ignomy, or disease, which is entailed on parental vices; and which, as a natural infliction, may remain to distress the miserable inheritor throughout the course of a distempered and painful life. Extreme poverty, also, which not unfrequently overtakes very excellent people, brings with it a train of disastrous consequences, too varied and intricate, for recital; but, amongst which, the single one of being withheld from the gratification of benevolent activity, from useful and laudable exertion

exertion, forms no inconsiderable occasions of bitterness and sorrow.

But, let us forbear to extend any further the unhappy narrative of human calamity. Let us rather recollect, that the day is approaching, which will bring deliverance to the captives; which “shall break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free.”

To those, under present sufferings, we wish to suggest the greatest,—perhaps, in many instances, the *only* relief, which can possibly be obtained—the promise given in the words of my text.

Let them remember, that this gracious assurance is made to every grievous condition of mortality, when connected with an honest and good heart; or, in proportion as it has been otherwise, with a sincere and christian repentance. Let them remember, that their severest sor-

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rows are under the perfect controul of God ; and that, if he allows them to remain, it is in no wise a presumption of his indifference to their affliction, nor of his inability to remove it. With Omnipotence all things are possible. *He* can “ in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” call his creatures even from darkness and from death, into the ineffable light of his countenance. But, should his dealings with the virtuous mourner, be in many instances “ unsearchable and past finding out ;” of this he must be satisfied, unless he relinquishes his faith, that the purposes of God are benevolent : for, he is assured, that “ all things work together for good to them that love him.” From this animating persuasion, the true christian, amidst that multitude of sorrows which he may have in his heart, should draw the sweetest consolation. The man unto whom “ spiritual things are foolishness ;” whose
mind

mind is either hurried away by the prosperity of fortune, or clouded by infidel speculation, may sneer at that view of things, which he has neither leisure nor light to contemplate. But the christian, who, under all his mournings, hath yet "tasted that the Lord is gracious," cannot be persuaded that his faith is vain. If in this world he has tribulation, his hope and his repose are centered in the goodness and power of that divine person, who hath already said unto him, "be of good cheer *I have overcome the world.*"

Nay, by the views which christianity presents, the true disciples of Jesus are led to that estimate of human life, which reconciles them to the irksome part allotted to themselves; while they manifest the effectual power of the *religious principle*, by displaying to the world a state of sorrowing, unmixed with murmur, and dignified by holy resignation.

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These are the pious and the rational characters, unto whom our Lord addresses this righteous benediction, "*blessed are they that mourn, for, they shall be comforted.*" These are the characters, who now "going on their way, weeping, yet bearing forth good fruit, shall assuredly come again with joy, and bring their sheaves with them."

SERMON

SERMON XI.

1 PETER v. 5.

BE CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY.

IT is highly illustrative of the wisdom and excellence of divine precept, that it intimately accords with the circumstances of the present life. Whoever connects his scrutiny of the human character with the study of the scriptures, will be convinced of this fact; and will, probably, become satisfied, that, in proportion as the doctrines of the gospel are made the rules of action, men not only escape a variety of evil, to which they are obnoxious; but en-

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joy a far more abundant measure of positive good.

The occasions of our misadventure and distress, are, for the most part, derived from these three sources: the eager pursuit of *unprofitable objects*: from an indulgence in *proper instincts*, carried to excess: or from the turbulent operation of *evil passions*.

To all of these the Gospel applies the suitable preventives.

It certifies us of the vanity of all things temporal; and reveals to us the blessed abodes of permanent felicity. It solicits a wise regulation even of innocent enjoyment; and connects the virtue of temperance with the excellent properties of faith and goodness.* It condemns the lusts by which we

* Galat. v. 23.

are impelled as the fatal sources of corruption and of our bitterest afflictions. “ From whence come wars
“ and fightings among you ? Come
“ they not hence ? even of your lusts
“ which war in your members ? Ye
“ lust, and have not : ye kill, and
“ desire to have ; and cannot obtain.”*

Among the many false and dangerous qualities, by which the heart of man is wont to be seduced, and impiously directed ; there are few more general, more pernicious, or worse adapted to the circumstances of mortality, than that distinguished by the odious appellation, *Pride*.

Various and emphatical are the condemnations of this wicked principle, contained in the scriptures. We are there enjoined to meekness, patience,

* James, ch. iv.

gentleness, poverty of spirit; or, in the strong expression of the text, “to be *clothed* with humility.”

The fitness of this qualification will be easily discerned, if, first of all, we give a due attention to the present circumstances, and destinations of man.

In doing this, it immediately occurs, that he is placed in a state of positive *Dependence*: that he has been called into life, and continues to exist, by the operation of a power and a will, foreign and superior to himself; over which he has no control; and the immensity of which wholly surpasses his faculty of comprehension. By the appointment of this invisible and mighty agent, we find that the system of our animal frame is adapted to that general œconomy of nature, with which we are surrounded. We find a similar provision

vision made for every living creature ; and from them continued to that infinite variety of inanimate bodies, with which this fruitful earth is so plentifully stored. Yet all this fine agreement has been originally established, and is still preserved, without the smallest contribution from the counsel or the art of man. He is no more than one of the passing objects in this great arrangement ; unto the general laws of which his mortal frame is subjected : and, as it lives and prospers with their harmony and order, so would it suffer and perish with their interruption and confusion.

This state of dependence is still further augmented, when we consider that numerous catalogue of *woes*, to which the human race is constantly exposed, either from changes in their own frames, or from the irregularities of the elements by which they are encompassed.

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By the operation of the former, we every day behold them falling from a state of ease, and health, and joy, to the wretched conditions of disease and sorrow. No man can say how early, or how late, his neighbour's sufferings may be brought home to himself; nor whether he shall give up his precarious breath by any *sudden* failure in his mortal body, or by the gradual progress of some slow consuming malady.

But he is not liable only to dangers from within : casualties, external, and numerous, are at all times possible, and frequently surprise him. The cloud, now passing over his head, may instantly let loose that deadly flash, which shall strike him to the ground. In a moment, the earth, whereon he treads, may open beneath *him*, as it has done to thousands, and entomb him in her bowels. While he yet escapes the
sudden

sudden strokes of accident, or nature ; let it not be forgotten, that danger and mischance are infinitely varied in their forms, and that the ways of their approach, however multiplied, are perpetually open. Should the heavens, only for a season, withhold “ the early or the latter rain ;” or, should these descend in excessive measure upon the thirsty earth ; distress would equally overtake him ; and he would quickly perceive “ no fruit to be on the vine ; “ the labour of the olive to cease ; and “ the flock to be cut off from the fold.”

To prosecute the story of man’s dependence, would prove a work without promised limitation. It is also unnecessary to pursue it : because, from the imperfect sketch, which we have already attempted, it will surely appear, how much it behoves so helpless a creature—to “ be clothed with humility.”

The fitness of this qualification might be further enforced by a suitable consideration of the *Ignorance* of man ; and the experienced *Shortness* of human life.

To instance only in a few words. Though vain man would be wise, how ignorant does he still remain of the true causes, even of such ordinary appearances, as are daily presented in the grand philosophy of nature ; and which, with a considerable class of men, are the subjects of constant investigation and study ! Yet the pride of reason, impatient of that restraint which would confine her to utility and happiness, is for ever pursuing an object, perhaps never to be overtaken — the knowledge of *first principles*.

Let us endeavour to justify this remark, by references the most familiar and pointed. They may be confined
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to the immediate *frame* and *composition* of *man*.

And first, how little do we comprehend the power of that principle which can preserve, in health and action—even to the ordinary period of life—a body formed of perishable matter; and for ever tending to decay and dissolution! On what *life* ultimately depends: wherein it consists: what it is; we are in fact wholly uninformed. If any should answer, it depends upon a combination of *heat* and *motion*; I would venture to condemn the presumption and vanity of the reply, by reminding them, that we understand not the true philosophy or causes of either of these principles; and, being thus ignorant of their real nature, cannot, in any just reasoning, determine to what they may contribute. In the case before us, we can go no farther than to say, that heat and motion

tion are *connected* with life; and so far from concluding them to be the natural instruments by which life consists, it appears fully as reasonable to infer that they are merely its *effects*.

I might go on to mark the *slowness*, wherewith that knowledge has been acquired, which we really *do* possess, in the mechanism of our own bodies: upon our ignorance, even yet, in regard to much of their general œconomy; and to the true uses of many of their parts. But, I rather choose to close this part of our subject, by recommending to your observation, that if we are thus embarrassed with difficulties in our investigation of such objects, as are manifest to our eyes; sensible to our feeling; accessible to every examination and experiment which the wonderful ingenuity of man can possibly devise; with what modesty; submission; caution; with what pious confession of self-ignorance,

ignorance, ought we to proceed in our researches into the nature of an *immaterial being!* a *mind!* a *spirit!* or, in scripture language, a *human soul!* that faculty, which includes, within its marvellous existence, all the inexplicable properties, which thought displays: which feels; contemplates; recollects; reviews; anticipates; approves; abhors; hopes, and fears; triumphs in remembrance; shudders with remorse; travels in a moment through the regions of space; and whose motion and imagination are bounded only by infinity. Of such a substance as this, though in reality it is our *proper self*, what do we comprehend! What have the wisest among men declared? It will be granted, that, after all their labours, we understand not the mechanism or operations of the human mind, any more than we can comprehend its connection with the human body.

If,

If, then, on these and similar exalted topics, much remains impenetrable to the most diligent inquiry, and to all the force of science; if the most learned, the most cultivated, the most sagacious, the ablest among men, have great reason to confess their insufficiency to these things, and to be clothed with humility; what excuse can be found for that wretched self-consequence which is wont to appear amidst the *ordinary* class of men? Yet, further, what humiliation is there not demanded from the still *lower* orders! The illiterate, the unimproved, the ignorant? It is a great, though a common mistake, to suppose that pride necessarily attaches to the high in knowledge or in fortune: examples abound to refute this illiberal suggestion; and to prove, that an humble and gentle spirit may inhabit the most exalted rank and genius; while a proud heart may be associated with poverty and ignorance.

It

It is to the praise of true science, among *us*, that those illustrious men who have shone its most distinguished lights, have been no less marked for their piety and humility, than for their extraordinary progress in that sound and useful knowledge, from which numerous benefits have been deduced to their brethren of mankind. Theirs was not of that "knowledge which puffeth up," but of that genuine character, which resulted from a cautious study of the works of God, and led to pious and steady veneration. It either generated, or was combined with, that propriety of general sentiment; that true wisdom and reverence in the mind; which, like the influence of charity, worked to the edification and advantages of men.

Is it not to be wondered at, that natural observation and study should ever fail of producing these wholesome fruits?

fruits? Might they not be expected to bring a sure remedy for that false pride which is the result of self-misapprehension? Let us imagine (for example) the *astronomer*, amidst the beauty and majesty of night, tracing the courses of the revolving planets: let us suppose him, as he certainly feels himself, fully satisfied, that these innumerable orbs are inhabited by beings of an equal, if not superior intelligence to man: and now, what becomes of every vain opinion, and the extraordinary presumption of human grandeur? May he not almost fear to be *overlooked* in this astonishing range of multiplied existence? At least will he not exclaim; when I “consider
“thy heavens, even the works of thy
“fingers, the moon and the stars
“which thou hast ordained; what is
“man that thou art mindful of him,
“and the son of man that thou visitest
“him?”

Modesty

Modesty and self-distrust are generally connected with true knowledge. Were it not so, it could hardly with truth be said, that “wisdom excelleth
 “folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.” The man of extensive science thinks humbly of his attainments; knowing how inconsiderable is the amount of all his labours, compared to the sum of those things, wherewith he is wholly unacquainted. He is always ready and wise enough to acknowledge, “hardly do we guess
 “aright at the things that are upon
 “the earth, and with labour do we
 “find the things that are before us:
 “but the things that are in heaven
 “who hath searched out?”

It is the superficial scholar, the man of infant knowledge, who is carried away with his own conceits; and
 “imagining himself to be something
 “when in fact he is nothing, de-
 “ceiveth

“ceiveth himself;” while he becomes ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of others. Yet, this is the character, who flutters in his own vanity; who affects to look down with scorn on the plain, ordinary man; possessed, it may be, of much better sense and judgment than himself; and who would fain be wise, “even above that which is written.”

Still the notions of the vain make no alteration in the nature of things, or the condition of characters; and it will be found agreeable to the deductions of truth; that man has great reason to be humble, at once on account of his *dependence* and his *ignorance*.

But he has other very weighty motives to the culture of this excellent virtue; and whoever bestows a proper thought upon the subject, will easily discover

discover them, in the *precariousness of life*, and the appointed *shortness of its duration*.

These are facts so familiar even to the most heedless of us all, that more cannot be necessary than to invite the mind to a recollection of them; and point out their application to the precept of the text.

What can offer a more wholesome corrective to the false pride of man, amidst the ardour of his pursuits, the vastness of his projects, or the exultations of success; than to be reminded, that all this enterprize, glory, and vanity, depend, to *him*, upon tenures so uncertain, as the continued action of his heart; upon the beat or stoppage of his pulse; even upon the breath within his nostrils. In an unexpected instant all these have been frequently known to cease; and, with

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that sudden pause, "all his thoughts have perished."

"In the midst of life we are in death:" thence the former, is, in scripture, compared, with much force and beauty, to objects the most fleeting and quick in their escape: to a vapour; a shadow; a flower of the field; to a tale that is told; and, finally, to a thing of naught. And, what, though the generality of men should not be cut off by the execution of a sudden mandate! What, though many should live to see their children's children; and fill up the measure of man's days on earth! To what does all this amount, but the small pittance of "threescore years and ten? or, if men be found so strong as to come to fourscore years; then is that strength but labour and sorrow; so soon passeth it away, and they are gone."

But

But the suitableness of this excellent virtue, humility, will become still more conspicuous, when we contemplate the character of man at that point of view, in which it is presented by the Gospel.

Of this it is the clear and universal doctrine; the very foundation of the divine system; that human nature is depraved; "corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts;" that this corruption is continued, in successive generations, from parent to child; that we are actually born in sin; and that, in fact, "the whole world is become guilty before God."

Upon this view of things, the great scheme of redemption, by the Son of God, most obviously impends; nor indeed, without such a previous statement of human circumstances, could it be supposed necessary, or made to appear consistent with infinite wisdom

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and design. The very term, redemption, implies a change or rescue from one condition to another; and, in the acceptation of scripture, signifies a deliverance of no less magnitude, than from the bondage of sin, and guilt, and misery, to a state of righteousness, and sanctification, and happiness, and glory: to the knowledge and love of God, and of his beloved Son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Such has been the redemption of fallen man. “By grace we are saved
“through faith; and that, not of
“ourselves; it is the gift of God.
“Not of works, lest any man should
“boast.”* “We are not our own,
we are bought with a price:”† a
price, whose immensity cannot be estimated; the precious blood of Christ. But, has all the world really become

* Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

† 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

guilty before God? In his sight shall no man living be justified? Have we no power of ourselves to help ourselves? Must not any man trust in his own righteousness? then, "where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" and, finally, let us ask with the apostle, where is boasting then? With him, also, let us reply, "it is excluded." If any go about, like certain of the ancient Jews, to establish their own righteousness, laying claim to salvation by virtue of their merits alone; the gospel will quickly undeceive them; and shew, that, at best "they are unprofitable servants:"* that whatever they may think of their own worthiness, yet no man shall be finally accepted; "no man shall come unto the Father, but by Christ."† Should any value themselves upon a superiority to

* Luke xvii. 10.

† John xiv. 6.

a brother, the gospel requires, that “each esteem other better than themselves.”* Should any man think highly of his endowments; the strength of his understanding; the brilliancy of his talents; the exaltation of his genius; the apostle will meet him with these simple, but mortifying questions, “who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”† Should any man pride himself upon the extent of his possessions; upon “goods laid up for many years:” should he, through the multitude of his riches, be in danger of saying, “who is the Lord?” the gospel will set before him the dreadful possibility, that “this night his soul may be required of

* Phil. ii. 3.

† 1 Cor. iv. 7.

“him:

“ him: then whose shall those things
“ be which he has provided ? ” *

Humility is the true preparative for the reception of divine grace in the heart of man. It is an indispensable requisite in the formation of a christian. Pride and christianity hold no more fellowship, than does light with darkness; the temple of God with idols; or faith with infidelity. It is that wicked passion, which, rising to excess, is wont to exalt itself “ above all that is called God.” Thence it is, that the gospel directs against it so great a measure of condemnation. “ He that exalteth himself, shall assuredly be abased.” — “ God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” — “ Whosoever receiveth not the kingdom of God as “ a *little child*, he shall in no wise

* Luke xii. 20.

“enter therein.” Citations, to the same purpose, would be endless. Let us therefore only subjoin, that it is among the multiplied operations of the power of God, to “pull down the strong holds; cast out imaginations; and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of him; and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”*

But, with him “who is of a contrite and *humble* spirit,” “the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity,” hath declared, by his prophet, that he will make his dwelling place.† Humility is here described as a qualification of the heart *peculiarly* acceptable to God. After this, need any argument be offered to enforce it? or, if such an one should fail, can any other prove effec-

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

† Isaiah lxvii. 15.

tual in persuading to the culture of this excellent virtue? If there should be found any who dare incline to think lightly of this principle, it is because they misunderstand its import. With humility, they may perhaps associate the idea of servility; meanness; a degradation of the human character; a degeneracy in sentiment and pursuit. These are false imaginations. The humility of a christian consists of other matter. It is, in the first place, fully consistent with the greatest boldness and intrepidity in conduct. The disciples of *Jesus* "were clothed with humility;" who nevertheless, in the cause of truth, opposed every adversary; despised every danger; assailed every vice; "resisted unto blood:" and under the providence of its great Author, established the gospel in defiance of the rulers of this world; and the overgrown power of "spiritual wickedness in high places."

Humility,

Humility, therefore, imposes no restraint upon the greatest activity in enterprise; the most determined firmness in action. Neither does it require any man to depart from his rights; or to make even an unworthy concession; to allow of any imposition; or to suffer an unjust infliction. The apostles, though ready, when required, to sacrifice their lives in defence of the gospel, failed not to employ every just and legal opportunity of asserting their privileges, and of disappointing the malice of the persecutors.

But, it is not only true, that the humble man is as little exposed to insults and to losses as he of an opposite temper; but that he really escapes many of the mortifications and pains, incident to the latter. Pride, and its inseparable associate, jealousy, are, to the eye of observation, positive *diseases* of the mind. They banish its repose;

repose; they prey upon its health; they sap the very foundation of its comforts and enjoyments. The proud man is for ever at war with his species: for, others are as high minded and unyielding as himself; and, because none will submit to retreat, all are compelled to suffer. The desire of pre-eminence, however insignificant the occasion, is the restless passion which agitates and torments all minds, in which the spirit of Christ holds not a gracious influence; and whose desires and ambition rise not above "the beggarly elements of the world." But the humble christian; the meek and lowly follower of Jesus; is a stranger to all this folly and distraction. Instead of being jealous of his consequence, he makes daily confession of his wretchedness, and worthily laments his sins. He knows the infirmities of a poor, frail nature; and having no confidence in himself, flees for strength and

and for protection unto him that "is able to save to the uttermost." In him he has sure trust; for he finds that he is "heard in that he feared." From the violent assaults of pride; from the resentment of thwarted ambition; from the angry strife of tongues, he is guarded and secure. He gives no offence in any thing: he is humble; and he is in peace. His reward is with him. He has put on the yoke of *him*, "who was meek" and lowly in heart; and he has found "rest unto his soul."

But, is there no object worthy the ambition? Is there no dignity? Are there not any honours, meet for the pursuit and emulation of an humble christian? Yes, such a temper is consistent with the noblest, the most exalted ambition that can influence the heart of man—the ambition of immortal life, in happiness and glory.
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It is consistent with the highest dignity, to which human nature can arrive;—the dignity of true religion and virtue. While these are the grand objects to which the humble mind is suitably directed; the temper, by which it is disposed and governed, very eminently contributes to facilitate their attainment. Conscious of its own weakness; its insufficiency to conduct itself; its necessity for some guide, superior to human reason, in the concerns of religion and a life to come; it submits, with all meekness, and faith, to the counsels and the doctrines of *him*, who only hath immortality; Jesus, “the life, and the light, and the truth.” By this wise acquiescence, the humble christian is delivered from those wearisome, and inquisitive speculations, which, in matters of religion, harrafs many bolder and restless spirits; while his mind is left free for the pious redemption of time,
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and the pursuit of that knowledge, which "maketh wise unto salvation." At the same time, be it remembered, that the *faith*, thus chosen by the meek and satisfied disciple of Christ, bears the highest authority which all the force of reason, research, and learning can supply, that it is grounded in truth; that its objects are real; and that the day is approaching, which will evince, that it has not been in vain.

If, then, the various path of human life, is, to the feet of the humble man, comparatively clear and smooth: if he, of all men, is least exposed to the intrigues and wrongs, because least offensive to the interests and ambition of the proud and powerful: if his own indifference to those splendid honours, or even ordinary advantages, which are sought through anxiety and toil; or, it may be, by violence and fraud, and a total relinquishing of christian principle;

principle ; if his retirement from these things preserves the composure, and secures the integrity of his immortal mind : if it be, moreover, the effect of humility to attract the approbation of the discerning and the worthy : to disarm the malice ; and to conciliate the affections of men : to accord with the circumstances, the necessities of life ; and to preserve the soul, as it were, in harmony with nature : above all, if “ God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble ;” what remains, but that instead of being “ desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another ;” instead of rendering vain the grace of God by any false notions of our own wisdom or our own righteousness ; that we “ lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness ; and receive, with *meekness*, the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls.”

SERMON

S E R M O N X I I .

ROMANS xiii. 4.

FOR HE IS THE MINISTER OF GOD TO THEE
FOR GOOD.

HOWEVER greatly men may differ in their wishes ; however invincible may be their prejudices for peculiar administrations and modes of government ; there is surely one general truth, to which *every* man of a sound mind and good heart will undoubtedly subscribe ; for instance, “ That the End
“ of all Government ought to be the
“ production of the greatest possible
“ Good and happiness, derivable from a
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“ State of Society and Order.” Reason, calm and unbiaſſed, cannot diſcover any other purpoſe worthy of purſuit by the governors of mankind. It is only while good is the unequivocal object of their vocation and miniſtry, that the people, committed to their charge, have any ſecurity for the continuance of peace and freedom ; the diſtribution of equal and comprehensive juſtice ; or for rejoicing over the abundant and natural rewards of uſeful induſtry. Without this excellent end in the purport of their hearts, princes are too frequently impoſed upon by the mockeries of ambition, and fall an eaſy prey to the many guilty paſſions incident to exaltation and to power.

Moſt agreeably, therefore, to the intereſts of civil union, has the great apoſtle in the ſingle, ſhort ſentence, by which the text is compoſed, inſtructed

structed, at once the ruler and the subject, in the true nature and design of government. He has not at all condescended to *argue* on the occasion: examination is either presupposed, or conceived to be wholly unnecessary: the conclusion is certain and instinctive: and it becomes a self-evident proposition, that he, who governs among the people, "is the minister of God to them for good."

What infinite mischief have knaves and fools introduced and spread among mankind by the dismembering, the discription of the scriptures! How may the cause of truth, though sure to return into its eternal course of rectitude and fitness, be, for a while, eclipsed or totally concealed by imperfect and unqualified citation! Let the whole passage be exhibited to view, and if it relates to doctrine which is practical, the sense will generally be apparent to the most ordinary capacity.

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Of this, the part of scripture, from which the text is taken, will be found greatly illustrative. It is this: “ Let
“ every soul be subject unto the higher
“ powers: for there is no power but
“ of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore
“ resisteth the power, resisteth the
“ ordinance of God: and they that
“ resist, shall receive to themselves
“ damnation. For rulers are not a
“ terror to good works, but to the
“ evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid
“ of the power? do that which is good,
“ and thou shalt have praise of the
“ same. For he is the minister of God
“ to thee for good.”

It must be obvious to every thinking man, that, by the false application of certain detached portions of this quotation, a defence, a justification might be imposed upon the world, of the most flagitious and wicked *tyranny*,
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by which the human race was ever persecuted and destroyed. Suppose the following was to be introduced unconditionally, without any explanation from the entire context ! for instance ;
 “ There is no power but of God : the
 “ powers that be are ordained of God.
 “ Whosoever therefore resisteth the
 “ power, resisteth the ordinance of
 “ God ; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” I ask, what would be the inevitable result of this doctrine, detached from the qualifying sense of the entire passage, of which it forms a part. Would it not indisputably prove, that no despotism, however monstrous ; however hostile to order and justice ; however subversive of all private happiness and public prosperity ; either could or ought to be opposed ; for, that being a power, constituted and active, it was therefore ordained of God ; and that they who resisted, should “ receive to

themselves damnation ?” This is one, among many examples, of the fatal conclusions, deducible from an imperfect and dismembered quotation of the scriptures.

But, while reason firmly denies ; and the best feelings of nature shudder at a conclusion so terrible and so ruinous ; so destructive of all hope, and joy, and blessedness, and *good* ; the gospel, the pure unmutilated word of God, will vindicate the one, and relieve the other, by placing before the eyes of all who are willing to behold it, the undeniable and obvious truth on its broad and proper basis. Thus it will appear in the present instance, that the words of the text, and the verse immediately preceding, become a full and satisfactory explanation of the doctrine by which they are introduced. They clearly teach its application, and unfold the spirit of the context. From them we
learn

learn that the true cause of *their* criminality, who indiscriminately resist the authority of rulers, arises from hence, viz. that they are inimical, in effect, to *good*, as a *principle*. They even work to their own destruction: for, we learn from the apostle that the *end* of government is the *good* of its subjects: when he would define the purpose and office of a governor, he does it in these words; "He is the minister of God to thee for good." It is presupposed, then, before the opening of the chapter, that the good of the state is the object of those powers, which "are ordained of God."

Now, though reason and revelation bear united testimony to this great fact; though we shall hardly find any man who in the calm of thought and of discourse, will dare to dispute, or is even desirous of combating a principle so grounded in benevolence and

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truth;

truth : yet amidst the bustle of the world, the struggles for pre-eminence, and the interests of party, it is a thought which has too generally made a faint impress on the minds of the *great*, that they are really raised to authority and rule for no other purpose, than that of administering to the greatest possible good of those committed to their charge.

A remark, such as this, is fully warranted by the experience of men, and the evidence of universal history.

It becomes then a duty not only suitable to, but greatly demanded of the pulpit, at all times, and in every country, to invite those, who are high in office and in power, to a serious observation of the text ; and as a means of impressing them with the sacredness of that character, to which they are ordained, to place before them (first of all) this

this immense and awful consideration
—*that they are the ministers of God.*

To make a pause in the career of vanity and folly ; of dissipation and impiety ; and to ask the important question—for what end am I created ? is an inquiry incumbent upon every man : and should seem natural to all who are endued with a reasonable and reflecting mind. But this solemn examination, this anxious research into the part to be sustained, is more especially pressed upon those, who find themselves elevated to a situation of *authority* ; where command is answered by obedience ; where even morals secure imitation ; and consequently where the people, over whom they are appointed, may be rendered wise and virtuous by the influence of example ; happy or miserable by the benevolent exertion, or the shameful abuse of power.

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The violence and the miseries which oppress the human race, find their general result in the ascendancy of the passions over the authority and force of reason. The former acquire strength in proportion to the vacancy of useful thought, and the backwardness of men to take that moral and religious view of things, to which they might be led by attending to the stupendous operations of the Deity, in the visible and beautiful display of *nature*: still further, by marking the manifest communication of his will in the sacred page of *revelation*.

From the latter, we collect, that a Governor among the people is bound to consider himself, not as a man, who, having attained to power, either in the course of inheritance, or by the strength of his arm, is justified in employing it as a possession of right, personal and absolute: far otherwise: it behoves
him

him now to remember, with utmost diligence, the true end of civil government: that it is an institution ordained by heaven for the preservation of order and justice; for the protection and happiness of the human race. Let him therefore weigh well the greatness and dignity of his trust; the solemnity of his engagement. The responsibility is immense; and on an approaching day he must render up to God an accurate and faithful account of his whole administration. In that tremendous judgment, what will become of rulers who have not set God before their eyes! who have eat up the people as it were grass; counting them as property, or as *nothing*; forgetting, that “they were the Lord’s, and the sheep of his pasture.”

To inquire how far the right to try and to adjudge extends to the people, is altogether needless: it is at the same time

time vain ; because, being a subject of opinion, it might lead to endless discussion, and depend, for its issue, on the varying result of political reasoning. We are enabled to try the question before a tribunal, where fluctuation and uncertainty are excluded—the sure and direct word of scripture. By this we are privileged to determine, without any danger of mistake, that the powers which be, are not independent sovereignties of the earth, which have only their pleasure and their ambition to gratify and accommodate ; in opposition to justice, and mercy, and universal righteousness. No : kings and princes are ordained to cultivate and secure the permanent advantages of the community ; to study their interests ; to protect their rights ; to watch over their prosperity and happiness ; to *live* for these beneficent and glorious uses. Such is the abridgment of the principles and the genius of that minister
or

or governor, whom the apostle supposes: all of which, and a great deal more, he has included and expressed in the concise and benevolent sentence which composes the text, "He is the minister of God to thee for good."

The minister of God! What an awful situation, and character is this! What anxiety, what holy fear must occupy the mind of that man who beholds himself in such circumstance as this, and has learned its prodigious consequence! Aware of the frailties incident to his nature; yet more so, of the danger, to which those frailties are exposed, by that self-misapprehension which is wont to accompany greatness; by the many insidious and false friends, who are perpetually at hand to flatter its vanities, to sanction its vices, and to assuage its fears: aware of these formidable hindrances, interposed between the man and his duty; how will
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he humble himself in the presence of his Maker! and, when he thinks upon the extensiveness of the obligations which he is appointed to fulfil, how sincere, how fervent will be his prayers to God, like to the pious and wise king of Israel, that he will “give his
“servant an understanding heart, to
“judge his people; and that he may
“discern between good and bad!”

But, be it here observed, that it does not appertain to kings, princes and governors, alone, to remember the vastness of their charge: the text comprehends every *subordinate* minister or magistrate, whatever is his rank, his office, or his power. Each and all of these are to consider themselves, in their various degrees of authority and trust, as the guardians of justice; the dispensers of general blessings; as moral and religious agents: in the comprehensive and emphatic words of the apostle,

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stle, as the ministers of God to men for good.

Such being, in brief, the character in which men are taught to contemplate and to receive their rulers; the former are, in their turn, now called upon most seriously, to remember, that for the secure enjoyment of civil advantages and blessings, *certain conditions* are to be observed by *them*, without the performance of which, the best dispositions, the most benevolent designs, the wisest counsels of those who are in authority, will fail of utility and be for ever lost to society. Of these, the first which I shall notice, is, the love of *Order*.

This branch of our subject, if treated agreeably to the measure of its importance, might, indeed, extend to volumes. It must here be confined to general remark.

Whoever

Whoever studies the works of the Creator ; whether he confines his observations to things that are on the earth, or raises them to the unbounded prospect of the surrounding heavens ; whether he applies them to inanimate or to animated nature, will perceive, that all the parts of this great whole, are upheld and cemented by that regularity of movement ; that method in operation ; that distinctness in arrangement ; and uniformity in laws, which, in their combinations of action, may all be comprehended in the idea, which the term, *order*, conveys to the understanding.

Preservation and continuance are therefore the result of *this principle* ; while derangement and confusion would militate against the very conditions of existence ; and, had they license to operate, might overwhelm the harmonious frame of nature in darkness and destruction.

destruction. It follows, in consequence, that whoever sees any design and beauty; whoever deduces any joy, and happiness, and blessings from the glorious and concordant works of God; must be zealously attached to that divine principle, which cannot, even in imagination, be separated from their good and gracious operations.

But it is not to the preservation only of things *material* or *animal*, that the laws of order administer: between these, and the more exalted rank of *intellectual being*, we trace an obvious connection and affinity. We perceive, that the prosperity, the comforts, the existence of civil community, and even of domestic life, depend upon the uniform influence of the same healthful principle: that where order is defective, useful activity is impeded; where it is defeated and overturned, violence

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and

and rapine, in all their hideous variety of forms, ravage uncontrouled, till the state is wasted by misery and blood.

The principle, by which, in the intellectual system, order is introduced and secured ; which compresses the political fabric into one great mass of mutual dependence and support ; which combines man with man by reciprocal necessity and engagement ; is a well-arranged and just *Subordination*. Whether this will for ever be requisite, it is needless now to inquire. It is sufficient for the present, that there is no account in the annals of history ; in the whole records of time and humanity ; that civil and well-regulated society has hitherto existed without gradations of rank, authority, and wealth. I would further urge, that it is not within the compass of the human mind to *conceive* such a society ;

society ; until some previous revolution has taken place in the nature and character of man.

But, let every man be cautious how he expresses himself on this interesting and much agitated subject. The greatest possible perspicuity is no more than sufficient to withhold a certain description of hearers or readers, from the misapplication of the sentiments and remarks of others. On this occasion then, be it observed, that between *subordination* and *oppression*, the discriminating line is fixed and obvious. The former is the parent of harmony and order ; the latter, of discord and confusion. By the one, men are peaceably united and accommodated ; by the other, they are thrown into rebellion and distress. In this, we trace the gracious purposes of the Creator ; in that, we detect the cruel

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usurpation,

usurpation, and the audacious wickedness of man.

Next to the love of order, the principle of *Public Spirit*, or *True Patriotism*, may be noticed as indispensably necessary for securing the blessings of good government.

Patriotism is a term not easily defined. The application of it rests very much on political tenet and attachment. But, the meaning and the limits to which I would now confine it, are properly illustrated and marked in the character and conduct of *him*, whose regard to the *general advantage* prevails over *personal consideration*, through all its varying directions.

Whoever comprehends and estimates the amount of those benefits which result to him from social order, and
compares

compares them with the miserable privileges of an uncivilized state; cannot but perceive, how far the condition of laws, and government, and regulated life, are preferable to glooms of solitude or herds of savages. But, when we remember that we are rational and intelligent beings; that we are possessed of immortal faculties; that these are either progressive or retrograde; that, if not advancing toward perfection and happiness, they are sinking into depravity and misery; how will such recollections teach us to appreciate the value of that condition, and to be liberal in its support, which, in part, will be found to furnish the means, whereby the final object of every reasonable soul, may, under the grace of God, be followed and acquired—Everlasting life in happiness and glory.

As this is certainly the most excellent end, which we can conceive to be an-

swered by well regulated government, we are led to conclude that it is the true and final one in the purpose of the Almighty. It seems to administer to this great design, by affording to the well disposed, that abundant measure of security, liberty, and peaceful leisure, which remove anxiety; lead to tranquil thought; naturally accompanied by gentle manners and amiable dispositions: and, finally, by establishing that sober and reflective cast of soul, which delights in holy contemplation, the cherisher of virtue and piety in the human breast.

Reflections of this sort will not pass through the mind of any serious person without leaving an impression; nor fail to point out the immensity of the debt and obligation which are due from every individual, to that government, wherever it be established, from which he derives such substantial blessings.

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We are here naturally led to another principle, necessary to be ingrafted in the minds of those who would enjoy the privileges of good government—I mean—a disposition—a promptitude to *Obedience*.

To submit to the terms which are necessary to our welfare, can neither be derogatory to our understanding, nor lowering to our consequence. If it be admitted that government is an ordinance of heaven, it is obvious, that obedience to this divine institution must be equally so; because, if this should be withdrawn, government could in no wise exist. To ascertain the exact and proper measure of such obedience; how far it may be demanded, or ought to be extended, is an inquiry beyond the limits and spirit of my discourse. I am speaking of obedience as a general principle; as a qualification which ought to be predominant; over-

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balancing

balancing a *contrary* tendency. To define it more minutely, might perhaps be difficult. Every intelligent, honest and peaceable man will easily discern its proper bounds; will distinguish, as the occasion arises, between a baneful, a criminal compliance; and that degree of submission indispensably required for the preservation of order, and the purposes of general utility. He will unremittingly observe his system of propriety and peace; and while with the courage of a man, and the watchfulness of a citizen, he opposes himself with undaunted spirit to every perilous encroachment of power, he will abhor all unprovoked and wanton rebellion; and discriminate wisely between those instances where resistance might be warranted, and necessary; and where, though it might be equally *lawful*, yet, with a view to public safety, it might neither be requisite nor expedient.

It

It must contribute to increase our admiration of obedience as a principle in the human mind, when we recollect that it prevails throughout the whole œconomy of nature : and although arguments drawn from the affinity of things material, with the more exalted order of intellectual being, might not be allowed wholly unexceptionable ; yet it must be granted, that in the line of analogy, properly ascertained, corresponding conclusions could be deduced ; and such as to the mind of a philosopher and a christian, would abound with satisfaction and instruction.

To this it may possibly be replied ; it is true, we perceive that all the visible works of the creation, are obedient to certain established laws ; that they are controuled by unerring and uniform principles ; and move in admirable regularity. But, what argument does this furnish—for we are now referring
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to reason and analogy, not to authority and prescription—What argument, it may be asked, will arise from these general observations, to shew the fitness and necessity of obedience from man to man? If any objector should propose this question, the answer would be as concise as just—It might be confined to this. You allow that man is formed for a state of social intercourse: this cannot exist, to any useful and extensive purpose, without the vigorous and wholesome operation of laws. To enforce these, *authority* must be acknowledged. This requires that Government should be established: and this again cannot remain and act without obedience.

Thus, obedience to human laws resolves itself into a principle of piety and submission to the will of God: and thus the exhortation of the apostle will appear to be grounded in perfect truth and wisdom,

wisdom, when he requires our submission “to every ordinance of *man*, for the *Lord’s* sake.”

Need it be observed, that this of course implies every ordinance which is in itself reconcilable to the laws of justice and righteousness? Perhaps the doctrine, intended by this exhortation, may yet be more properly unfolded, by receiving it in this sense: let the end of your submission to the ordinances of man, be a reverence for that divine will, by which government is decreed, for the most gracious and benevolent purposes; even for the expansive happiness of the whole human race.

And here, let us endeavour to urge the dissipated and the daring to thought and recollection. Upon them, more especially, we would call, who are impatient of all restraint, political and moral;

moral ; who are yet untaught to fix any limit to their ideas of *independence*, or their sacrifices to extravagance : to *these*, we are zealous in recommending even a moment's attention to the doctrine of the text : we are earnest in reminding them, that by their quick and unwarranted opposition of those in useful and necessary authority, they may reject that good which God provides for them ; and while by a resistance so replete with folly and intemperance, they in the first instance attack and ruin their dearest interests upon earth ; it is greatly to be feared, that without a timely reform in their dispositions and their conduct, they may finally be numbered with those desperate and abandoned characters, who, as the apostle has dreadfully foretold, “ shall receive to themselves damnation.”

One other qualification, requisite in every man who lays claim to the protection

tection of good government, remains yet to be instanced. This is a *Readiness to Co-operate*, to use every peaceable means, annexed to his situation, of recommending and enforcing those *just* and *salutary* measures of the state under which he lives, which in his conscience he believes will contribute to its prosperity. He will do this, as the occasion urges, without regard, or even in opposition to any prejudices he may entertain for peculiar opinions ; or any personal attachments to individuals, or to party. To co-operate in promoting what we acknowledge and avow, is surely the office of every good and independent member of the community. It is a duty more elevated than obedience, in as far as he who is active in diffusing what tends to general advantage, discovers a more ardent love of virtue, and a livelier affection for his brethren, than he who only obeys a command,
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and enjoys in tranquillity and silence the result of that duty, which is confined to the praise of *commendable acquiescence*.

If we are zealous for the continuance and the happiness of the constitution, by which we are protected in our persons and our property, we shall surely be forward in proportioning our exertions to its necessities ; and rejoice in employing every assistance within our reach, which can, in any way, contribute to prevent its ruin or mitigate its distress.

In this, let not any individual, however private or lowly his condition, account his weight or influence as nothing. This would be a doctrine as erroneous as dangerous. There is not any man who lives, and who retains his faculties, from whom *no* effect is derived. However unobserved its course,
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however scanty or insignificant the measure of its waters ; yet there is no stream, so diminutive or so obscure, which does not contribute to form and support the bold and majestic river by which it is received. So it is with the affairs of men. Opinions, flowing from sources the most private; whether taking a moral, a religious, or a political direction ; are sure to reach, through mediums of communication, innumerable and unknown, the channel of general sentiment, which they tinge with a colouring, proportioned to their strength. From this view of his situation, the most humble may discover even his *political* importance; and will thence learn the necessity for that cautious and wise regulation of his conduct and conversation, when applied to the concerns of government, which he is called upon to observe, in a degree equal to the interest he takes in its security and happiness. He will
also

also recollect, that his consequence and value to the community, and therefore to himself, will be heightened and extended, not only by abhorring that which is evil, and pernicious, but by cleaving to that which is good, and salutary ; by an active *co-operation* to promote amidst the circle, however small, by which he is embraced, and wherein he moves, that respect for governors and magistrates, which is the bond of peace, and the pledge of its continuance.

But, if these attentions are so desirable, so requisite in the middle and lower ranks of life, for the preservation of social order, they are doubtless more indispensably so amidst the high in consequence, the opulent, the powerful. “ A city which is set on an hill, cannot be hid.” The influence of the great and the pre-eminent is visible, not only in affecting the manners and
morals

morals of the world, but in biasing the cast of public *opinion*. It operates in as great a degree beyond that of the inferior orders, as the mountain torrent exceeds, in impetuosity and effect, the almost imperceptible stream which creeps along the vale. Support, active and effectual, can be given by those alone, on whom power has bestowed those means, which it is vain to resist. It were to be wished, then, that such as these, would, in a more especial manner, keep in memory the doctrine which breathes in the text; and while rulers remain the "ministers of God to men for good," that they, whose pre-eminence of station procures imitation to example, and authority to sentiment, would think seriously on the high consequence of their situation; how much they owe to their country; how greatly it behoves them, on all just occasions, to co-operate with those who are appointed to the arduous labours, the for-

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midable employment, the innumerable anxieties and difficulties, incident to the condition of those whose fortune it is—to *govern*.

But, let it not be forgotten, that the power of working to good and beneficial, or to base and pernicious ends, in the weighty business of policy and government, is not confined to the titled and the wealthy. Where these advantages are wanting, the deficiency is perhaps more than compensated, by an inheritance which distinguishes man still more from man; and gives to him who possesses it, that ascendancy over the general mind; that command and hold of the human passions; which enables him to bias the multitude, and direct them to the execution of his favourite wishes. This appertains to him who is endued with great and extraordinary *talents*: where a genius, penetrating and immense, is perhaps regulated

regulated by a judgment, solid and matured. Let such an one consider, that these are rare endowments; of which, it is reasonable to believe, that the account required will be peculiarly minute and pressing: for, if the subject is attentively investigated; it will seem, that mental ability is not so much a man's own property, as is his wealth, and the power which attends it. Talents are the direct, the immediate gift of God. Riches and titles may, in great part, arise, and frequently are derived from personal labour and exertion: and though this consideration will not, in any instance, justify their misapplication, still it serves to discriminate between the varied rights which we possess over these different kinds of property; and may possibly be useful in reminding men of what they are very prone to forget; and what may to many even appear a strange doctrine; that they are as accountable for the

use of their *faculties*, as for their actions.

I have thus taken that general sketch, compatible with a sermon's limitation, of the reciprocal duties of governors and subjects. The result appears to be this.

It rests with the former to recollect, and to act upon, this principle; that the success of their counsels and the prosperity of the state will be determined by the *end* to which their ministration is directed. They are also cautioned to remember, this simple, yet important truth, *that a good government cannot be overturned by those who are its objects*. Individuals of turbulent and restless spirits, may occasionally disturb, but cannot overwhelm a system, grounded in justice, and sanctioned by heaven. In ridicule and defiance of wicked and seducing arts,
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sense and truth, like water, will find their level; and ensure obedience, respect and love from the great community of men, unto those whom they feel active in the cause of general happiness.

The natural tendency of mankind to obey, and to revere authority, is abundantly manifested by the existence of the many detestable governments which continue at this day upon the earth; and range themselves amidst the monuments of those crying "evils, which are done under the sun." It appears to me that while ambition, injustice and oppression operate to produce disaffection, rebellion and revenge; *that* government, which acts upon a plan of justice and clemency; which loves its subjects; which regards their wishes, and embraces with impartial and outstretched arm the interests of *all*; which has none other than *Good* for its

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object;

object ; will as surely attract universal love, and ensure effectual support, as that the earth will yield her wholesome fruits to a genial sun and fostering seasons. To assert otherwise, would be to contend with the analogy, the harmony of nature ; and to present a most cruel libel against the human race.

But, lest any of those who might possess the suitable dispositions, should not have been fully aware of the requisitions, which are to give them force and efficacy ; and to mark themselves with the character of good and useful citizens ; I ventured, in a previous part of my discourse, to point them out, as they occurred to my mind ; and confined them to the following heads. A love of order. A preference of public to private interest. A disposition to obey. An activity to co-operate in enforcing the righteous measures of the government by which they are protected.

Such

Such are the qualifications, which we expect to find in the breast of every reflecting, peaceable man, and a christian. Such, *he* will never fail to cherish and to exercise, who keeps it in remembrance, as a general, comprehensive truth, that “the powers which be, are ordained of God;” that, without the diligent administration of laws, civil society would perish; and that the true design and office of every governor and magistrate, is briefly this, that he may become “the minister of God to men for good.”

MEMORANDUM

Reference is made to the memorandum dated 10/10/44, captioned as above, and to the report of the Committee on the subject of the same date. The Committee has considered the report and has concluded that the information furnished is of such a nature as to warrant the issuance of a subpoena for the production of the documents and records in question. It is recommended that the subpoena be issued to the effect that the documents and records be produced to the Committee on or before the 15th day of November, 1944.

S E R M O N X I I I .

COLOSSIANS i. 17.

AND HE IS BEFORE ALL THINGS, AND BY HIM
ALL THINGS CONSIST.

THE chapter from whence this grand and important text is taken, forms one of the numerous passages in the scriptures, by which the dispassionate mind may deduce satisfactory and distinct notions of the character and office of Jesus Christ.

The most rational and the surest method of obtaining a right understanding of this or any other doctrine of the
sacred

sacred writings, is, to compare it with texts of similar application and import.

In a question merely speculative, where the adoption of any opinion, however unwarranted, cannot possibly involve us in pernicious error, it is of little consequence to what conclusions we are led by the wanderings of fancy, or an obstinate attachment to those peculiar tenets, which, though heedlessly assumed at first, and perhaps very little regarded, may have acquired fame by novelty, and become worthy of defence, because they have provoked opposition.

But the nature of the subject, now before us, does not admit of indifference in its decision. It is not an object of speculation, where opinion implies no consequence. It is a high concern of the Christian System; even that *article of faith*, which may eventually lead to false or true notions of religion, and
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of ourselves ; of the condition of the human race ; and of the purposes to be answered by the mission, the death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Upon the character and office of Christ, much labour and ability, ingenuity, and learning, and acrimony, have been already expended. What is the result of all this? The disputants have retired, with the same irreconcilable principles with which they had approached. But, neither is the prolixity of their works, nor their mutual inefficacy on the respective authors by any means unaccountable. For the first; when men attempt to reduce an original principle, or what can only be an article of revelation, to the level and the trial of human reason, they enter upon a discussion wholly unlimited ; because, by that mode of pursuit, they never can arrive at truth. Again ; that decision does not commonly succeed to discussion, conversion
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to the stronger argument, is easily understood, when we recollect, that where the mind may originally have been candid and dispassionate; yet the many casual offences to which controversy is prone to give birth; an unwillingness to confess ourselves foiled by an adversary, who may perhaps have violated the engagements of charity and candour; and the natural desire of subduing an antagonist by whom we have been irritated; these may, at length prevail to render an anxiety for triumph, equal to the zeal for truth and reality. Add to this, that the mind may, in the end, be insensibly led to espouse any notion, however extraordinary, by the continued habitude of defending it. She may forget the importance of right conclusion, even in the concern of *religion*, amidst the ardour of dispute, and the fatigue of intense disquisition: and though controversy should, in the result, lead to truth, and consequent advantages

advantages to men, we have reason to apprehend, that such salutary effects, are, in general, very remote, and always precarious : that the controversialists themselves are seldom edified by their own disputations : that, the “ faith which worketh by love,” is not often quickened and increased by them : and that, upon the whole, it is not desirable for truth to be interrupted or disturbed, for the purpose of making it clear again.

It seems strange to an ordinary man, that while we are possessed of the decisive authority of scripture, any of its primary and fundamental doctrines can remain in doubt, and become the objects of endless contention. Yet this is unhappily the case; and *one*, the foremost in importance, an article of *faith* indeed, but involving practical consequences, has of late been made not only an occasion for dispute; but
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is positively denied to be true, by a considerable class of people of this time and country: I mean the *Divinity of Christ*.

Should it here be objected to me, that I am inadvertently imbibing that spirit of controversy which I have just ventured to condemn; I reply, that the observation is premature and groundless. I deny that the important question before us, *admits* of controversy; unless, while the scriptures are opened, men will dispute whether the words which they read, are really there or not. Should it again be objected, that it is at least useless, and may be mischievous, to introduce this subject into debate at all; I reply, that the divinity of our Saviour has been so openly questioned, and is become a subject of such unreserved inquiry, that there can no longer be any impropriety in offering a few plain pages on that great occasion:

sion: the rather, since it is acknowledged, that the opposers of the doctrine are numerous and increasing.

I do not elate myself by supposing, that, after the various elaborate and learned works upon this interesting topic, any new and unthought of arguments or modes of treatment remain for me. No: In toil and erudition I am conscious of having been much more than anticipated: and that what I am now to bring forward must recommend itself, not by laboured argument, or abstruse disquisition; but, what may prove more adapted to the uses of general readers, by conciseness and simplicity. It may not, however, on these accounts, be found to fail in its application, or to possess less force of truth.

I begin from this point; and supposing, for a moment, that the subject
has

has as yet been wholly unexamined; and taking it for granted, that scripture is best elucidated by scripture; I open the sacred volume, without a wish that truth should rest on this side, or on that; and under the direction of no other guides than those of an honest mind and competent judgment. I wish only to take a general view of the leading and apposite readings, which relate to the character and the office of Christ.

Among the prophets, *Isaiab* is found to be pointed and full, in his description of the Messiah. I search into his writings; and when I have advanced as far as the ninth chapter, where the prophet is acknowledged to be speaking of Christ, I discover the following passage. “For, unto us a child is
“born, unto us a son is given: and
“the government shall be upon his
“shoulder: and his name shall be
“called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the
“mighty

“mighty God, the everlasting Father,
“the Prince of peace.”*

Does there remain any doubt upon my mind, if I really believe the prophet to be inspired by the Almighty; to be taught the truth by him; does there remain any doubt, whether such language as this, stamps with the signature of divinity, the character to whom it is applied? I do not feel any uncertainty, unless it can be proved, that words have, in this particular instance, lost their efficacy, and are no longer the symbols of ideas. The mighty *God*—The everlasting *Father*. These are the appellations appropriate unto Christ. So he is to be *called*. Is he to be called, what, in reality he is not? Is he to be addressed by that sacred and hallowed name to which he has no pretension? To admit this,

* Isaiah ix. 6.

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would be to accuse the writer of the most fatal deceit, as well as the most flagrant idolatry. Such is the sentiment of a dispassionate mind; the result of a plain understanding directed to the words of the prophet. Is it to be denied that the conclusion is just? What is there to object? If, nothing! am I not fully warranted to believe, that, in the mind of the prophet, divinity was associated with the character of Christ?

But I must now go back to a passage in the same writer, which, by its interpretation will be found not less connected with our subject than that which we have already adduced. It is in the seventh chapter, ver. 14.—I there find it written, “Behold! a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Here is a positive prediction of a future miraculous event. If it has related to Christ,
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it will of course be confirmed by the gospel history of this extraordinary personage. I must therefore look into these gospels for its witness and avowal. I turn to St. Matthew, the Evangelist first in order; and, where he relates the history of the *miraculous conception* of Jesus, I find the following passage.

“ Now all this was done, that it might
 “ be fulfilled which was spoken of the
 “ Lord by the prophet, saying, behold
 “ a virgin shall be with child, and
 “ shall bring forth a son, and they
 “ shall call his name Immanuel, which
 “ being interpreted, is, *God with us.*”

Thus, if it were wanted, the first citation which I have made from Isaiah, receives additional force and illustration from the Evangelist’s explanation of another of those titles, by which the prophet characterises the Messiah.

I am aware that this expression—*God with us*,—may, as it is here used,

be possibly *softened* by the aid of *metaphor* and *fancy*. But, while there exists such a prophecy as that first quoted from Isaiah, I am also wholly justified in receiving the interpretation of *this*, agreeably to its literal rendering and sense : and, as this is the most natural and obvious, I conclude it to be the *just* acceptation of the passage. But, let us continue.

We have been naturally led by the prophecy, just adduced, to the Gospel history of Jesus. To return to the Old Testament is unnecessary ; for, was I to cite every text, therein contained, which might apply to our purpose, I do not conceive it possible to produce any more explicit, or more indisputable, than what I have already referred to. I am therefore now to proceed in the examination of these gospels ; and to prove, whether the majestic language, in which Isaiah has described

described the character and office of Christ, is fully acknowledged, asserted, and ratified by the tenour of these writings, and by those additional works of the apostles, contained in the New Testament.

In doing this, the first passage, by which I am forcibly impressed, is in the concluding chapter of the gospel, now under research. Christ is delivering his final instructions to the apostles, who were to spread christianity through the earth, and to establish the faith of men. He does it in these words: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

How does this appear to the understanding? All nations are to be baptized as well in the name of the *Son*, as that of the *Father*. What are the

ideas which arise spontaneously in the mind on reading this solemn injunction? Can I suppose that a *creature*; that a man, because raised from the dead by the operation of that same power which originally breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; can I imagine that an angel; that the most exalted of created intelligencies, would presume upon that dignity, that seeming level with Divinity, which, by this single sentence, Jesus appears so manifestly to assert? If we are to be baptized equally in the name of the Son, as of the Father, is it not reasonable to infer, that the *importance* is equal? at least, that without such connection, the right of baptism, as a sacrament, would be infringed and broken? Is not such conclusion natural? Is it not the first impression made upon the mind? I would appeal to its unbiaſſed and upright judgment. If I am answered in the affirmative, I ask, further,

further, upon what *principle*, agreeably to human conception, it would be thus broken? Is there any other reply to be offered, than because it would seem to deduct from that holy and incomprehensible efficacy; that *entire* and divine influence; expressed by the terms, “inward and spiritual grace;” of which baptism is the “outward, visible sign?”

The force of this text, in declaring the divinity of Christ, seems to me so powerful, that it can hardly be urged too far. I continue it however no longer, than to propose the following question. Is it possible for a man of truth to lay his hand upon his heart, and to aver, that by the command, “go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” he really does not conceive an intimate affinity of Christ

with the divine nature to be at all suggested ; and that Jesus might with all fitness and reverence have issued the same command, in the character of a mortal man raised from the dead by the power of God ?

A further circumstance of considerable weight is discernible in the same chapter. It occurs at the seventeenth verse, where we read, that when the disciples saw Jesus, “ they *worshipped* him.” Is it not reasonable to conclude, that as Jesus did not object to their adoration, he admitted its propriety, and received it to himself ? Yet he had long ago confirmed the great commandment, when he said, “ thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, “ and him only shalt thou serve.” The inference, deducible from this consideration, I leave to the judgment and bosom of the reader. At the conclusion of St. Luke’s gospel he will find a
similar

similar account of unrebuked worship, paid to Jesus by his disciples.

But the history of the miraculous conception which I have no more than faintly touched upon, is, if fully contemplated, an insurmountable difficulty in the way of those who would adopt the doctrine of Christ's *humanity*. I find that Matthew and Luke are as clear and explicit in teaching that Jesus was born of a woman, unconnected with man, as they are in any other historical relation. In the former I read it thus recorded: "Now the birth
" of Jesus Christ was on this wise:
" when as his mother Mary was
" espoused to Joseph, before they came
" together she was found with child of
" the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph, her
" husband, being a just man, and not
" willing to make her a public ex-
" ample, was minded to put her away
" privily. But, while he thought on
" these

“ these things, behold, the angel of
“ the Lord appeared unto him in a
“ dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of
“ David, fear not to take unto thee
“ Mary thy wife: for, that which is
“ conceived in her, is of the Holy
“ Ghost.”*

In the gospel of St. Luke I also read the following. “ And the angel said
“ unto her, fear not, Mary: for, thou
“ hast found favour with God. And
“ behold thou shalt conceive in thy
“ womb, and bring forth a son, and
“ shalt call his name Jesus.”—“ Then
“ said Mary unto the angel, how shall
“ this be, seeing I know not a man?
“ And the angel answered and said
“ unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come
“ upon thee, and the power of the
“ Highest shall overshadow thee: there-
“ fore also that holy thing which shall

* Matthew i. 18, 19, 20.

“ be

“ be born of thee, shall be called the
“ Son of God.”*

What conclusions can we possibly draw from testimonies such as these, but that, if the gospel history is true, the conception of Christ was not according to the common laws of nature; that he derived not his existence in the most remote degree from the agency of man, although born of a woman; and that to consider him as a mere natural man, is therefore an irreconcilable, an unfounded, and highly unphilosophical opinion! Is there any means whereby a conclusion, so apparently just and rational, can possibly be invalidated?

Let us now inquire into the doctrine which that evangelist teaches, who has in an especial manner laboured

* Luke i. 30, &c.

to communicate unto men the true light in which they are to behold the character of Jesus. I mean St. John. He enters upon his gospel with this perspicuous and grand delineation. I am compelled to introduce a long citation.

“ In the beginning was the word,
“ and the word was with God, and
“ the word was God. The same was in
“ the beginning with God. All things
“ were made by him; and without
“ him was not any thing made that
“ was made. In him was life; and
“ the life was the light of men. And
“ the light shineth in darkness, and
“ the darkness comprehended it not.
“ There was a man sent from God
“ whose name was John: The same
“ came for a witness, to bear witness
“ of the light, that all men through
“ him might believe. He was not
“ that light but was sent to bear wit-
“ nefs

" nefs of that light. That was the
 " true light which lighteth every man
 " that cometh into the world. He
 " was in the world, and the world was
 " made by him; and the world knew
 " him not. He came unto his own,
 " and his own received him not. But
 " as many as received him, to them
 " gave he power to become the fons
 " of God, even to them that believe on
 " his name: which were born, not of
 " blood, nor of the will of the flesh,
 " nor of the will of man, but of God.
 " And the *word* was made flesh, and
 " dwelt among us (and we beheld his
 " glory, the glory as of the only be-
 " gotten of the Father) full of grace
 " and truth."

I have ventured to observe in an
 early page of this discourse, that the
 subject, before us, did not, in reality,
 admit of controversy. I trust, that un-
 less we mean to dispute the truth of
 those

those scriptures, to which alone we make our appeal, I have hitherto justified my assertion. I feel satisfied, that the passages which I have hitherto cited, convey their import with great perspicuity and strength. How does this last citation from the gospel by St. John, appear to us? "In the beginning was the *word*, and the word was with God, and the word *was* God." Whatever the evangelist comprehends by the term, *word*, it was in the beginning, and was *God*. Be it here remarked, that the term, *beginning*, goes as far back, and implies as primæval an existence, as can be conceived by the human faculty. The question arises, what *application* does St. John make of the term, *word*, which was in the beginning, and was *God*? It is this—"And the *word* was made *flesh* and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." "ther."

Does

Does any man pretend to doubt whether the person of Jesus is here signified? If this is beyond controversy, it is certain, in all fair construction of language, that by the use of the same term, *word*, in the first verse of this chapter, the person of Christ was equally pointed to; therefore that *he* was in the beginning, and was God.

From the second verse to the close of the thirteenth, there is not any thing to interrupt the connection in sense, between the first verse and the fourteenth. We may therefore place the first and the fourteenth together: thus; “ In the beginning was the
“ word, and the word was with God,
“ and the word was God. And the
“ word was made flesh, and dwelt
“ among us (and we beheld his glory,
“ the glory as of the only begotten of
“ the Father) full of grace and truth.”

With

With some readers this may assist to elucidate the force of the passage, by bringing it into a narrower range.

It must for ever appear inexplicable to an ordinary understanding, that men can think differently of the sense which the evangelist has conveyed in this exordium of his gospel: that they should so misapply their time, and talents, and learning, as to make this chapter of St. John a subject of curious and subtle disquisition. What is there to contend for? The *word* which was in the beginning, which was with God, and *was* God; was also made *flesh* and dwelt among us! By the expression, "made flesh," and dwelt among us, it is allowed that our Lord's coming in the flesh is signified. John therefore commences his gospel by bearing testimony to the *pre-existence* and *divinity* of Jesus Christ.

The

The next passage, which appears to me highly worthy of remark, I find in the conclusion of the eighth chapter of the same evangelist. I do not know that it has ever before been employed in illustration of the subject in which I am engaged. In a discourse held by Jesus with certain of the pharisees, he tells them, "Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, thou art not fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, *I am*."*

I doubt not, but that to various readers there may appear some inaccuracy in the construction of this sentence. Before Abraham was, *I was*, might, perhaps, to the generality, seem a reply much more apt and intelligible. The

* John viii. 56, 57, 58.

truth is, that, allowing Christ in this place to speak as a man, and agreeably to the perception of the human mind, such language involves extravagance and confusion. It would be absurd and wholly indefensible. How is it to be explained? How to be reconciled with sense and consistency? It cannot be void of a perfect adaptation and meaning.

To explain it in the most familiar manner possible, I observe, that, to a human and a finite mind, *time* seems to be distributed into three distinct portions; the *past*, the *present*, and the *future*. All these are distinctly presented to the imagination, and expressed by language suited to our perceptions; such as, *I was*, *I am*, *I shall be*. In these we speak as we feel, and in perfect consonance with that mode of existence, in which we are placed. Had Christ therefore perceived *only*, and
exactly

exactly as *we* do, he would, beyond any admission of doubt, have expressed himself agreeably thereto, and have said, before Abraham was, *I* was. But, it must surely appear, that his reply is not by any means agreeable to our mode of thinking and perceiving. It is not made in the language of a person, unto whom *time* had a *beginning*; or with whom ideas were presented in succession and progress. It is in a phrase suitable alone to a divine, a primæval comprehension. Ascribed to such, it becomes intelligible, magnificent, and just. From the eternal Mind all difference of times and seasons is wholly excluded. Past, present, and to come, form but one point. Rather, past and future have no existence. All is equally *present*, and comprehended in the phrase, *I am*. The divine intelligence bears no *reference* to *time*. The mode, in which it exists, is an eternal mode. Thus,

“one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”*

It is from this view of the subject, that the majestic language of our Lord can be rendered perspicuous, when he says unto the pharisees, “Before Abraham *was*, I *am*.” And, as it will not admit of any other explanation, it remains among the more positive evidences of his divinity, because it is an implication derived immediately from his own witness and authority. Can any thing be advanced in contradiction to this reasoning, and consequent conclusion? The words, which Christ applies to himself, are applicable only to a nature which is divine and infinite: originating from any other, they are unwarranted and absurd. They bear no agreement with our notions of a

* 2 Pet. iii. 8.

created being. I am therefore under a necessity of believing in the *divinity* of Jesus, or of relinquishing my faith in his word.

With this I close my few observations on this interesting passage of scripture, and proceed in search of further analogies.*

Passing over those of less direct tendency and force, I forbear to instance till I come to the fourteenth chapter of the same gospel; where I find a peculiar strength and energy in the reply of Christ to Philip. This disciple faith unto him, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus faith unto him, "have I been so long

* Whoever wishes to see the distinction between a *temporal* and an *eternal* mode of existence, very ingeniously discussed, will find his desire highly gratified by the perusal of a Disquisition "On the Nature of Time, by the late Soames Jenyns, Esq." It is in his publication entitled, "Disquisitions on several subjects."

“time with you, and yet hast thou not
“known me Philip?”* Is the peculiarity, the boldness, the strength of these words to be done away by figure and metaphor? Was language so peremptory, so unqualified, and direct, ever appropriate to himself by any inspired writer? by prophet? or evangelist? or by any of the called of God? If not, the conclusion is, that the claims of Jesus were in their nature essentially, specifically different from those of all others.

But, the evidences not only of the divinity, but, even of the *Pre-existence* of Christ, have not passed undisputed. Yet this is not occasioned by any indecision of scripture on the subject, as I have already shewed by a citation from the beginning of St. John's gospel. In the seventeenth chapter of the same, the fact is declared by a single verse: for instance, the

* John xiv. 8, 9.

fifth; "And now, O Father, glorify
 "thou me with thine own self, with
 "the glory which I had with thee
 "before the world was." If this and
 such like affirmations are to be re-
 fined away by the aid of figure and
 allegory, I have no longer any foun-
 dation remaining, whereupon to build
 with security and confidence. I can-
 not discriminate between fact and
 imagery; words cease to be the sym-
 bols of ideas: they lose their im-
 port and significance: I have no
 criterion whereby to distinguish reali-
 ties from semblances so strong and
 exquisite.

But, let us continue. We are now
 led in the course of our inquiry to the
 Acts of the Apostles; in which, from
 the very title of the book, we cannot
 expect to find much reference to the
 subject of this discourse. An historical
 fact is, however, related, which seems

to me worthy of notice. It occurs in the narrative of Stephen's death ; the first public martyr, in the cause of christianity, of whom we are informed. It is told in these words : " And they " stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and " saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit."* If we are to take our faith from the apostles and first disciples of Jesus ; if they who received the truth from the nearest source possible, were most likely to understand it ; this single, or, as it were, accidental instance, here recurred to, has consequently great weight. It goes this far ; to manifest the sentiment of Stephen, touching the power and character of Christ. To him he offers up his latest breath in worship and in prayer. It may be, the passage is still more apt : " calling upon *God* ; and saying, *Lord Jesus*, receive my spirit !" How does he call upon God ? Is it thus ? " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit !" Does not the context admit

* Ch. vii. 59.

this

this interpretation? However this may be, it is obvious that Stephen commends his spirit in solemn and in anxious prayer to Jesus Christ. Surely his faith in the divinity, and the absolute power of the person, unto whom he prays, cannot on any reasonable grounds be disputed. This would of course be to accuse him of folly and idolatry. To both of these, the proofs which history has given us of his wisdom, and piety, and learning, are in direct contradiction. The conclusion is fairly this: Stephen believed in the *divinity* of Christ: he formed his belief on *rational principles*; and he derived his evidence of the truth from the highest authority possible to be obtained. It is also strictly reasonable to infer, that *he* was an instance of the *common* faith, embraced and taught by the apostles and disciples of that age.

The Epistles of St. Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, and the commissioned preacher

preacher of christianity to the Gentiles, are now presented to my examination. I of course expect to find in them, an unequivocal, decisive rule of faith on this important article. I presently discover, that in this I am not disappointed. Instead of making numerous citations, I shall introduce three or four passages only, whose strength and perspicuity I conceive to be such, as may supersede the necessity of all further reference to the same apostle. And first, in his Epistle to the Colossians, I read the following. Referring to Christ, he says, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were *created by* him, and for him:" after which are introduced the words of my text; "and he is before

“ before all things, and by him all things consist.” It continues ; “ And “ he is the head of the body, the “ church : who is the beginning, the “ first born from the dead ; that in “ all things he might have the pre- “ eminence. For it pleased the Father “ that in him should all fulness dwell,”* &c. Can I ever bring my mind to conceive of that person, as a *creature*, by whom were all things *created*, and in whom *all fulness* dwells ? Rather, can I, in my mind, apply such description of primæval power and unbounded being to any thing beneath the name and character of divinity ? I feel that I cannot.

But, suppose another man, after reading these passages of scripture, with as independent and honest a mind as I can have ; having no object in pursuit,

* Colof. i. 15, &c. &c.

no cause whatever to serve, but that of truth and reality; suppose such an one should tell me, that *he* feels quite *differently* on this occasion; that he cannot conceive that person to be any thing more than a *creature*, “by whom “were all things *created*,” and in “whom all fulness dwells!” What becomes of the argument (if I may call it argument) deduced from the mighty force of *feeling*? Here is feeling against feeling; and who shall pronounce between them?

Is there then no appeal? I assert that there is; and expect to make it with success to the *general sentiment* and *common sense* of mankind. By a verdict, such as this, I am desirous of abiding.

Pursuing my inquiry, I presently arrive at a passage in the writings of the same apostle, to which I am again constrained to apply those honest *feelings*, whose privilege to decide under certain conditions,

conditions, I have ventured to defend; that is, when they are warranted by the general sense and agreement of men. What I refer to, is in the first Epistle to Timothy; “And without controversy, “great is the mystery of godliness: “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, “preached unto the Gentiles, believed “on in the world, received up into “glory.”* The comment I have to offer on this plain attestation of facts, is, that my belief in the divinity of Christ is not here subjected to any other hesitation, than whether the writer speaks by sufficient authority, and is a faithful recorder of the truth. “God “manifest in the flesh;” “received up “into glory.” As a figure or metaphor, what allusion does all this bear to any event recorded in scripture? As an historical relation, it is perfectly

* 1 Tim. v. 16.

applicable

applicable to the coming and ascension of Christ : and, admitting his divinity, for the clear ascertaining of which this text seems principally to have been written, it applies most intimately through all its parts.

Again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews I find this explanation of the prophecy, contained in the forty-fifth Psalm and the eighth verse : “ But, unto the Son
“ he saith, thy throne, *O God*, is for
“ ever and ever : a sceptre of righteousness
“ is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”*

It must be obvious to every reader of this Epistle, that it opens by drawing an indelible line of distinction between the condition and rank of angels, as created beings, and the sovereign dignity of the Son of God, by his close affinity with the Father.

* Heb. i. 8.

“ For

“ For unto which of the angels said
 “ he at any time, thou art my son, this
 “ day have I begotten thee?” And
 again, “ I will be to him a father, and
 “ he shall be to me a son?” And
 again, when he bringeth in the first
 begotten into the world, he saith, “ and
 let all the angels of God worship him.”
 And of the angels he saith, “ who
 “ maketh his angels spirits, and his
 “ ministers a flame of fire. But, unto
 “ the Son he saith, thy throne, O *God*,
 “ is for ever and ever.”* We are
 moreover commanded to “ honour the
 Son even as we honour the Father.”†
 These, and many other analogous pas-
 sages, such as, “ the only begotten Son,
 “ which is in the bosom of the Fa-
 “ ther:”‡ “ this is my *beloved* Son in
 “ whom I am well pleased;”|| with
 other peculiarly dear and strong ex-

* Heb. i. 5, 6, &c. † John v. 23. ‡ Ib i. 18.

|| Matt. iii. 17. Mark i. 11. and ix. 7.

pressions

pressions of like import, dispersed through the scriptures, might surely lead us, even without such direct testimony as I have instanced, to admit that intimate, however incomprehensible union of the Son with the Father, which should seem to us impossible, unless the Son participated the proper and essential qualities of divinity.

But, my faith is to be grounded, not on auxiliary, though powerful phrase; but on affirmative evidence, and perspicuous doctrine. How great, how forcible, then, is that *positive testimony*, which I have thus briefly collected from the sacred writings! Was I now to labour for witnesses to *confront* such testimony, how vague, how unimportant would be the amount of my research! I do not hesitate to declare, that if such witnesses could be produced, the scripture would appear at such irreconcilable variance with itself, as
would

would render my faith in the whole impossible. But, where is this contrary testimony? Where are we taught to consider Jesus as any other than the only begotten Son of God? *begotten*, not *made*. Let us not pass hastily over the distinction—the former is the only epithet employed by scripture when it teaches the affinity of Christ with the Father. It is also employed, in such circumstance, to Christ only.

Does not the œconomy of universal existence exemplify the sure verisimilitude between parent and offspring? And however removed from our conception the analogy may be; however *impossible* in the present instance to trace an application; still, ideas, not inadmissible, may be formed, where distinctness is wanting; and though perhaps too subtile for human explication, may not have wholly exceeded the exertions of rational thought, or strayed beyond the extremest verge of possible truth.

Y

But,

But, I wish to inform myself whether the scriptures really contain any doctrine, or even any passing observation, which, upon inquiry, may seem to invalidate the force of that evidence, which, for the sake of such readers as may not have leisure for the perusal of a more elaborate treatise, I have endeavoured to comprehend in as narrow a range as the nature of the subject would admit.

In the first Epistle of Paul to Timothy I find the following passage: “For, “there is one God, and one mediator “between God and man, the *man* “Christ Jesus.”* I mark this as an instance of the strongest expression to be met with in the scripture, which may appear to oppose the divinity of Christ; and which may therefore be allowed to supersede the necessity of all further citation.

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

But

But it is not possible to admit, that the writer meant by this expression to assert that Christ was, in the limited and definable application of the term, a mere natural man; unless I also allow, that he is at that extraordinary variance with himself, which nothing can reconcile. For, how am I ever to conceive that the apostle could, in imagination, level that person to the rank of a finite creature; a perishable mortal; in whom, according to his own unqualified doctrine, expressed in the majesty of language, “dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily?”* Still more impossible is it for me to believe that St. Paul could imagine him to be mere man, after having testified, in allusion to Jesus, that “*God* was manifest in the *flesh*,” and “received up into glory.” But, I can easily conceive, that, in

* Colos. ii. 9.

reference to Christ, under his *assumption* of human nature, he might, without meaning in the smallest measure to derogate from his *divine* nature, style him “the man Christ Jesus.”

In the second chapter to the Philippians, his own words will probably be found to justify my observation, and to be a just expounding of himself. They are these ; “ Let this mind be in you, “ which was also in Christ Jesus ; “ who, being in the form of God, “ thought it not robbery to be equal “ with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form “ of a servant, and was made in the “ likeness of men : and being found in “ fashion as a man, he humbled himself, “ and became obedient unto death, even “ the death of the cross. Wherefore “ God also hath highly exalted him, “ and given him a name which should “ be above every name : that at the “ name

“ name of Jesus every knee should bow,
 “ of things in heaven, and things in
 “ earth, and things under the earth :
 “ and that every tongue should con-
 “ fess that Jesus Christ is *Lord*, to the
 “ glory of God the Father.”*

Does not an exaltation, such as this, elevate its object to something more than poor human nature, even when advanced to immortal happiness and glory ! Does it not raise the character described, to that elevated rank, which we contemplate as divine ? What ! am I to believe that the whole rational creation ; that angels, and arch-angels, with all the company of heaven, are to bow the knee in homage to a *creature*, once a mere, natural, historical *man* ? I cannot conceive this : it offers a violence to my understanding and judgment. I therefore

* Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, &c.

rejoice, that, according to my apprehension, the scriptures teach a very contrary doctrine.

Should the passage, just quoted from the Philippians, be, by any, accounted inadequate to the purpose for which it is adduced, it will surely be allowed that the following citation, from the same writer, leaves not a doubt of the true light in which *he* viewed the character of Jesus. I find it in the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. “ There is a *natural* “ body, and there is a *spiritual* body. “ And so it is written. The *first* man “ Adam was made a living soul ; the “ *last* Adam was made a quickening “ spirit. Howbeit that was not first “ which is spiritual ; but that which “ is natural ; and afterward that which “ is spiritual. The first man is of the “ earth, earthy ; the *second man* is the “ *Lord* from heaven.”*

* 1 Cor. xv. 44, &c.

Is it possible to speak in language more unequivocal? Can any man pretend to remain in suspense touching the true faith of the apostle, when he uses the expression, “man Christ Jesus?” In the passage, just cited, he distinguishes, with peculiar accuracy, between the *natural* man, and *him*, who took upon him, for a season, even “the form of a servant;” and was, for infinitely great purposes, “made in the likeness of men.” The *first* was of the earth, earthy. The *second* is the *Lord* from heaven.

I might now continue my research into the book of the Revelations. Whoever is informed in its contents, must be well aware how much I might deduce from thence, applicable to my present purpose. But I conceive it wholly unnecessary to proceed, or to recur, in search of additional testimony. If that, already instanced, is as strong

and as perspicuous as the subject can admit; and if, from it, satisfaction is not derived; there is no reason to believe that any other would perfectly convince. “There are men, who
“would not be persuaded, though one
“rose from the dead.”

The result of my inquiry appears to be this. The texts appertaining to the subject of Christ's divinity, are *numerous, affirmative, and clear*. Those, which, on first reading, may seem in the least to make against it, cannot be esteemed doctrinal and didactic; nor, in the estimation of a man who has not any favourite system to support, would they be allowed any weight, in opposition to the many *positive* texts with which the scriptures abound, illustrative of the former doctrine. Again, the latter admit of very fair and easy explanation, when we receive the Saviour in his two-fold character of *human and divine*; such as
he

he is manifestly represented by scripture. By keeping this connection constantly in view, I conceive that much embarrassment might be prevented, and every apparent difficulty removed from our investigation into this great subject. Let us not begin our inquiry under the influence of any private wish to be gratified, or system to be defended: let *truth* be our sole, grand object; and, while the scripture is open to our appeal, we shall not fall into any lasting or pernicious error. At all events, if contrariety of sentiment should arise, let us debate with candour and good will, and differ with charity and temper: for, “where envying, and strife
“is, there is confusion and every evil
“work:” where anger succeeds to dissonance in opinion, malevolence, the forerunner of persecution, is near at hand; brotherly kindness is afar off; and he, in whom we look for the qualities of the meek and lowly follower
of

of Jesus ; for a display of christian love and charity to men ; appears before our eyes, in the hateful character of a *po-lemical divine*. Virulence and anger are more properly characteristic of a defeated combatant, than of the assured and settled christian, who “ can have “ compassion on them, whom he believes to be out of the way.”

I am myself fully satisfied that the words of scripture assert the divinity of Christ. I am persuaded that the few passages referred to in this short discourse, are perfectly in proof of it ; that they cannot by any urging, or pressing ; by any appeal to original language ; or by any qualifying exposition whatsoever, be made to teach any other doctrine. What then ! will my conviction of this truth justify my total want of charity for him, who professes to think differently on this great occasion ? For me, I proceed more cautiously,

cautiously, and, I trust, more piously; more agreeably to the precepts of him, whose glorious character we are contemplating. I am wholly unwilling; moreover, I greatly fear, in this, or any instance, to “judge, or set at nought my brother,” believing “that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” — “Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.”

But where can be the place for calumny and invective? If I believe a man misled in a point where his present or future welfare is concerned, the only passion which can arise in my mind as a christian, or as a man, worthy the name of man, is a melancholy, a sorrow, an unspeakable distress: the only anxiety I can feel, is to bring him into a right faith; to shew unto him
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what *I* conceive to be the way of salvation. Can I reasonably hope to accomplish this most desirable end by intemperate address, by the phrase of *authority*, by unwarranted insinuation? These are not the weapons of the christian warfare. We do not discover in language, such as this, any traces of that divine temper which would “restore in the spirit of meekness;” but rather an earnest, that, if the power was given, unlike in purpose to that committed unto Paul, it would work to *destruction*, not to *edification*.*

How few of those who profess to differ, each from other, on this or any other point of speculation or of faith, are by any means qualified to enter upon the full discussion of it? If the majority of those, who imagine that they believe in the *divinity* of the Sa-

* 2 Cor. x. 8. XIII. 10.

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viour, were suddenly called upon to give their reasons for this faith, and to support it judiciously by the testimony of scripture; without wishing to give offence, I am free in expressing my fears that they would not be found sufficiently prepared for the demand.

In like manner it is just to conclude, notwithstanding the advantages, which, on this occasion, might attach to the side of *novelty*, and the state of constant *watchfulness*, necessarily required by an anxious minority; that, among those, who imagine they *disbelieve* the divinity of the Saviour, few have been invited to such scruple by the native impulse of an inquiring mind; or, if called upon to defend their rejection of the common faith, could assign even the generally adopted arguments on which their disbelief was grounded. The majority of men are directed by accident, or swayed by example. Few there

there are, whose principles have been deduced from diligent examination, and formed on cautious reasoning. A reflection of this nature should lead every man of true knowledge to be diligent in inviting to a calm inquiry, rather than to the ineffectual zeal of angry disputation; too frequently accompanied by the less graceful language of vehemence and abuse. "Who art thou," that, in a private capacity, "judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." It is not in the temper of christianity to extend and cultivate its everlasting truths by violence and wrath.

If the objector to the gospel, or the mutilator of its doctrines, is to be shewn the light, and established in the faith of Jesus by the interposition of human aid, it can be conceived to produce this beneficent effect, only while the love of truth gives birth to exertion,

tion, and kindness justifies zeal. In vain do we exhort, in vain do we seek to persuade, when the opponent has discovered that we are excited by the passion of anger, or impelled by the desire of *victory*. From the moment such cause of action, or such object is detected, debate is sharpened into acrimony; the whole becomes a trial of skill; and because, on each side, the desire of being serviceable no longer exists, the ability of becoming so is fruitless in both.

Amidst the fallies of intemperate argument upon this and such like topics, men are apt to forget that there exists an authority open to their appeal; by which, if they are willing to receive it, their controversy may be quickly terminated, and much expence of time and learning be happily reserved for occasions of substantial use.

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It is a consideration very gratifying to less profound scholars, that in the investigation of subjects, the most important to their happiness; those of a right *faith* and *morals* (for instance); they are as surely placed within the reach of truth and knowledge, as the most learned or informed among men. To the latter, no less than to the former, revelation must for ever remain the sovereign authority; the final appeal; so long as faith and practice are the subjects of inquiry, and the scriptures are acknowledged to comprehend them. Under these premises, all knowledge of remote ages; the tenets or opinions of the early christians, of whatever denomination, sect, or persuasion; the decision of learned synods; of ancient or modern councils; or whatever else we can imagine, will avail nothing; will be found no more than worthless acquirement, and a vain display of ineffectual labour, if they shall
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in any important article of faith or morals have at all diverted the mind from the pure and perspicuous doctrines contained in that gospel, of which, *we*, of *this day*, are as competent judges, as those who lived *sixteen hundred years ago*. What is it to me; what effect could it have in directing my creed, was I clearly ascertained of all the variety of opinions which have collectively been held and taught by every christian society, since the conclusion of the apostolic age to the present æra? In such a case as this, I wholly disown the force of *precedent*. It is, in most instances, more serviceable to truth, and more worthy the character of man, to be ruled by *principle*, formed upon unreserved inquiry and deliberate judgment, than meanly and lazily to act upon *prescription*, without proving its authority, or estimating its consequences. In the question before us there is but *one authority*, by which

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a christian can securely abide; that is, the scripture. Possessed of this, we draw as near to the source of light, and truth, and conviction, as christians of any age have done, since the cessation of instant miracles.

In as far as the confirmation of a general faith in revelation is concerned, we should consider ourselves placed in more advantageous circumstances than they of early times. In two points of view we obviously are so: first, by the manifest elucidation of scripture arising from the advancement of universal literature; especially from the growth of *natural knowledge*, and the improved state of *history*: secondly, from the opportunities we enjoy of marking the past *completion of prophecy*, by a recurrence to the records of time: to which add our opportunity of observing the novelty of those principles and events, which are now agitating

ting so extensive a share of the great political fabric.

To venture a prognostic on the probable result of this general contention; how it may operate to the continued fulfilling of prophecy; might neither be in proof of my modesty, or wisdom. But, if there are to be found men, who will not attend to these things; for, false science has nourished as many bigots as any errors whatsoever; yet others, who have eyes to see, attention to observe, judgment to discriminate, and honesty to acknowledge, perceive in the past agreement of history with prophecy, a strong confirmation of the christian faith: and can also imagine how the commotions which may yet be felt throughout the nations of the earth, may tend to renovate and purify the whole mass of men (as storms do the atmosphere); and by dissipating every obstacle to knowledge

and improvement; every corrupt and wicked imposition; may gradually prepare the way, and at length insure the introduction of the glorious gospel of Christ, “in *spirit* and in *truth*.”

What I have remarked on the visible agreement of events with prophecy, only goes to shew, that christians, of the present age, enjoy great and peculiar advantages, in trying the truth of revelation; detached I mean from the consideration of its peculiar doctrines. But, unless some fallacy shall be discovered in my general argument and mode of reasoning, it will also appear, that the sentiments, delivered in an early part of this discourse, and now resumed toward its conclusion, are properly established and supported.

They are, in spirit, simply these: That the question, pointing to the *divinity of Christ*, is not a subject for learned controversy, or contentious argument:

gument: it is not at all confined to the narrow limits of scholastic pride; nor buried beneath the rubbish of libraries, or ages; but, in defiance of all, that wisdom or frivolity, talents or their perversion, reason or absurdity can heap upon it, must be decided by the combined authority, and the plain but positive words of scripture only; and is therefore suitable to the faculties of every attentive man, who possesses a sound understanding and an honest mind; even though he cannot study it in any language but that of his own country.

I have thus offered, in as concise a form as could possibly be admitted, what seemed to me obvious and useful upon this interesting topic.

If a tract, so compendious and plain,
humbly addressed to every common
and

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and unprejudiced judgment, shall prove, in the most remote degree, the means of inviting to a composed and steady view of an object, so important and so dignified, any, who may either be embarrassed by doubts, originating in themselves, or interrupted and puzzled by the speculations of others : if I could foresee, that it might indeed prove equal to this kindly influence on the mind of *one solitary individual* ; I should not be ashamed of its simplicity, nor draw it to a close without “ an exceeding great reward.”

Together with such an one, I would pray to unite in humble but fervent veneration of the glorious and most benevolent Redeemer of men. With him I would join in acknowledging that glory, which appertained unto Jesus “ before the world was ; ” * and

* John xvii. 5.

in “honouring the Son even as we honour the Father.”* Let me add, that, with him, I would most cordially agree in beholding much more than the majesty of *human* nature, in that transcendent character, of whom it is declared, in the solemnity and full extent of language, that “He is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

* John v. 23.

THE END.